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The Book of
Modern British Verse

The Book of Modern British Verse

Edited by

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE



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TO H. P. S.

THESE SYDNEIAN SHOWERS

GOSSAMERY APRIL

GOLDEN OCTOBER

FOREWORD

This little collection is intended to present to American readers the character of contemporary British verse. The period has now definitely assumed the name of "Georgian." It began with John Masefield and has grown into the newer blossoming of Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Robert Nichols. The late petals of the Victorian flower began to droop under the reign of Edward VII. They dropped to the ground at the first touch of the frosty truth in the substance, and the converting concreteness in the expression, of "The Everlasting Mercy" and "The Widow in the Bye Street." The new era began with an assault upon reality and a shock of symbols. And upon it descended the conflagration of the world. The sowing was turned to the surface by a world war. The re-sowing began in the trenches: the first fruits of which are beautiful to the eye but bitter to the taste. What the full harvest will be no one can say, because the present bad weather of social, economic, and political turmoil is raging over the fields of dream.

The contemporary poets of Great Britain are much read and admired in America, a compliment not paid by Great Britain to American poets. I have edited this volume as a companion to the "Golden Treasury of Magazine Verse" to link the contemporaneous

FOREWORD

periods of British and American poetry. The present volume will serve to indicate, I trust, what the most recent character of British poetry is like. Points of difference with our own art, and they are fundamental in mood, may be studied. The instinct at present in America to appreciate good poetry from whatever source, will not permit these points of national and cultural difference to dull the enjoyment of an art whose nature we had begun to look upon as a little inadequate to our conception and understanding of life. Our own poetic independence has brought us to the point when we can enjoy British poetry when it is most British.

W. S. B.

Arlington Heights,
Massachusetts.
October 2, 1919.

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**The Book of
Modern British Verse**

I Time, You Old Gipsy Man

TIME, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

All things I'll give you
Will you be my guest,
Bells for your jennet
Of silver the best,
Goldsmiths shall beat you
A great golden ring,
Peacocks shall bow to you,
Little boys sing.
Oh, and sweet girls will
Festoon you with may,
Time, you old gipsy,
Why hasten away?
Last week in Babylon,
Last night in Rome,
Morning, and in the crush
Under Paul's dome;
Under Paul's dial
You tighten your rein —
Only a moment,
And off once again;
Off to some city

THE BOOK OF

Now blind in the womb,
Off to another
Ere that's in the tomb.

Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

Ralph Hodgson

2

The Star

BEAUTY had first my pride;
But now my heart she hath,
And all the whole world wide
Is Beauty's path!
By mountain, field and flood
I walked in hardihood;
But now with delicate pace
Her steps I trace.

Once did my spirit dare
In fond presumptuous dream
To make her ways more fair
That fair did seem.
But all the world became
Her ways elect, to shame
With their least lovely lot
My loftiest thought.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Her worshipful bright fire!
Ah! Whither will it lead
My burning faint desire
And feet that bleed?
Far in my failing view,
A pure and blazing gem,
She lights on earth the New
Jerusalem!

Willoughby Weaving

3

Discovery

BEAUTY walked over the hills and made them
bright.
She in the long fresh grass scattered her rains
Sparkling and glittering like a host of stars,
But not like stars cold, severe, terrible.
Hers was the laughter of the wind that leaped,
Arm-full of shadows, flinging them far and wide.
Hers the bright light within the quick green
Of every new leaf on the oldest tree.
It was her swimming made the river run
Shining as the sun;
Her voice, escaped from winter's chill and dark,
Singing in the incessant lark . . .
All this was hers — yet all this had not been
Except 'twas seen.
It was my eyes, Beauty, that made thee bright;
My ears that heard, the blood leaping in my veins,
The vehemence of transfiguring thought —

THE BOOK OF

Not lights and shadows, birds, grasses and rains —
That made thy wonders wonderful.
For it has been, Beauty, that I have seen thee,
Tedious as a painted cloth at a bad play,
Empty of meaning and so of all delight.
Now thou hast blessed me with a great pure bliss,
Shaking thy rainy light all over the earth,
And I have paid thee with my thankfulness.

John Freeman

4

Music Comes

MUSIC comes
Sweetly from the trembling string
When wizard fingers sweep
Dreamily, half asleep;
When through remembering reeds
Ancient airs and murmurs creep,
Oboe oboe following,
Flute answering clear high flute,
Voices, voices — falling mute,
And the jarring drums.

At night I heard
First a waking bird
Out of the quiet darkness sing . . .
Music comes
Strangely to the brain asleep!
And I heard
Soft, wizard fingers sweep
Music from the trembling string,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And through remembering reeds
Ancient airs and murmurs creep;
Oboe oboe following,
Flute calling clear high flute,
Voices faint, falling mute,
And low jarring drums;
Then all those airs
Sweetly jangled — newly strange,
Rich with change . . .
Was it the wind in the reeds?
Did the wind range
Over the trembling string;
Into flute and oboe pouring
Solemn music; sinking, soaring
Low to high,
Up and down the sky?
Was it the wind jarring
Drowsy far-off drums?

Strangely to the brain asleep
Music comes.

John Freeman

5

Clavichords

[To Mrs. Gordon Woodhouse]

ITS pure and dulcet tone
So clear and cool
Rings out — tho' muffled by the centuries
Passed by;
Each note

THE BOOK OF

A distant sigh
From some dead lovely throat.

A sad cascade of sound
Floods the dim room with faded memories
Of beauty that has gone.
Like the reflected rhythm in some dusk blue pool,
Of dancing figures (long laid in the ground);—
Like moonlit skies
Or some far song harmonious and sublime—
Breaking the leaden slumber of the night.
A perfume, faint yet fair
As of an old press'd blossom that's reborn
Seeming to flower alone
Within the arid wilderness of Time
The music fills the air
Soft as the outspread fluttering wings
Of flower-bright butterflies
That dive and float
Through the sweet rose-flushed hours of summer dawn.
The rippling sound of silver strings
Break o'er our senses as small foaming waves
Break over rocks.
And into hidden caves
Of silent waters—never to be found—
Waters as clear and glistening as gems.

And in this ancient pool of melodies,
So soothing, deep,
We search for strange lost images and diadems
And old drowned pleasures,
— Each one shining bright

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And rescued from the crystal depths of sleep.

As the far sun-kissed sails of some full-rigged boat
Blown by a salt cool breeze
— Laden with age-old treasures
And rich merchandise,
Fade into evening on the foam-flecked seas,—
So this last glowing note
Hovers a while,—then dies.

Osbert Sitwell

6

Who Buys Land

WHO buys land buys many stones.
Who buys flesh buys many bones;
Who buys eggs buys many shells.
Who buys love buys nothing else.

Love is a burr upon the floor.
Love is a thief behind the door;
Who loves leman for her breath
May quench his fire and cry for death!

Love is a bridle, love is a load,
Love is a thorn upon the road;
Love is the fly that flits its hour,
Love is the shining venom-flower.

Love is a net, love is a snare,
Love is a bubble blown with air;

THE BOOK OF

Love starts hot, and waning cold.
Is withered in the grave's mould!
Seosamh MacCathmhaoil (Joseph Campbell)

7

Symbols

I SAW history in a poet's song,
In a river reach and a gallows-hill,
In a bridal bed, and a secret wrong,
In a crown of thorns: in a daffodil.

I imagined measureless time in a day,
And starry space in a wagon-road,
And the treasure of all good harvests lay
In a single seed that the sower sowed.

My garden-wind had driven and havened again
All ships that ever had gone to sea,
And I saw the glory of all dead men
In the shadow that went by the side of me.

John Drinkwater

8

So Much is Altered

SO much is altered; we no longer write
As those poets did, who, in their pride and might,
Went from their fellows and made a lonely song
Of their own victory or defeat and wrong.
Hewed out a great battle with the world.
For they were titans; passion on passion hurled,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Raised them to God. Men saw them, as from far
Eve-weary shepherds watch a distant star.
But now we go to cities, feel the need
To be near each other, to flow in crowds, to feed
On their rich human presences. We have said
That the ancient terror, loneliness, is dead.
Soul is like soul; the old enmity is past,
The war of self and self. And now at last
The poet has learned to serve; with the rest he weaves
The one fair pattern, and with them believes
That life is a green tree with many whispering leaves.

T. W. Earp

9

Man

I SAW Time running by —
Stop, Thief, was all the cry.
I heard a voice say, Peace!
Let this vain clamour cease.
Can ye bring lightning back
That leaves upon its track
Men, horses, oak trees dead?
Canst bring back Time? it said.
There's nothing in Man's mind
Can catch Time up behind;
In front of that fast Thief
There's no one — end this grief.
Tut, what is Man? How frail!
A grain, a little nail,
The wind, a change of cloth —
A fly can give him death.

THE BOOK OF

Some fishes in the sea
Are born to outlive thee,
And owls, and toads, and trees —
And is Man more than these?
I see Man's face in all
Things, be they great or small;
I see the face of him
In things that fly or swim;
One fate for all, I see —
Whatever that may be.
Imagination fits
Life to a day; though its
Length were a thousand years,
'Twould not decrease our fears;
What strikes men cold and dumb
Is that Death's time *must* come.
William H. Davies

10 *A Man Dreams That He is the Creator*

I SAT in heaven like the sun
Above a storm when winter was:
I took the snowflakes one by one
And turned their fragile shapes to glass:
I washed the rivers blue with rain
And made the meadows green again.

I took the birds and touched their springs,
Until they sang unearthly joys:

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

They flew about on golden wings
And glittered like an angel's toys:
I filled the fields with flowers' eyes,
As white as stars in Paradise.

And then I looked on man and knew
Him still intent on death — still proud;
Whereat into a rage I flew
And turned my body to a cloud:
In the dark shower of my soul
The star of earth was swallowed whole.
Fredegond Shove

II *Every Thing*

SINCE man has been articulate,
Mechanical, improvidently wise,
(Servant of Fate),
He has not understood the little cries
And foreign conversations of the small
Delightful creatures that have followed him
Not far behind;
Has failed to hear the sympathetic call
Of Crockery and Cutlery, those kind
Reposeful Teraphim
Of his domestic happiness; the Stool
He sat on, or the Door he entered through:
He has not thanked them, overbearing fool!
What is he coming to?

THE BOOK OF

But you should listen to the talk of these.
Honest they are, and patient they have kept,
Served him without his *Thank you* or his *Please* . . .
I often heard
The gentle Bed, a sigh between each word,
Murmuring, before I slept.
The Candle, as I blew it, cried aloud,
Then bowed,
And in a smoky argument
Into the darkness went.

The Kettle puffed a tentacle of breath: —
'Pooh! I have boiled his water, I don't know
Why; and he always says I boil too slow.
He never calls me "Sukie, dear," and oh,
I wonder why I squander my desire
Sitting submissive on his kitchen fire.'
Now the old Copper Basin suddenly
Rattled and tumbled from the shelf,
Bumping and crying: 'I can fall by myself;
Without a woman's hand
To patronize and coax and flatter me.
I understand
The lean and poise of gravitable land.'
It gave a raucous and tumultuous shout,
Twisted itself convulsively about,
Rested upon the floor, and, while I stare,
It stares and grins at me.

The old impetuous Gas above my head
Begins irascibly to flare and fret,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Wheezing into its epileptic jet,
Reminding me I ought to go to bed.

The Rafters creak; an Empty-Cupboard door
Swings open; now a wild Plank of the floor
Breaks from its joist, and leaps behind my foot.
Down from the chimney half a pound of Soot
Tumbles, and lies, and shakes itself again.
The Putty cracks against the window-pane.
A piece of Paper in the basket shoves
Another piece, and toward the bottom moves.
My independent Pencil, while I write,
Breaks at the point: the ruminating Clock
Stirs all its body and begins to rock.
Warning the waiting presence of the Night,
Strikes the dead hour, and tumbles to the plain
Ticking of ordinary work again.

You do well to remind me, and I praise
Your strangely individual foreign ways.
You call me from myself to recognize
Companionship in your unselfish eyes.
I want your dear acquaintances, although
I pass you arrogantly over, throw
Your lovely sounds, and squander them along
My busy days. I'll do you no more wrong.

Purr for me, Sukie, like a faithful cat.
You, my well trampled Boots, and you, my Hat,
Remain my friends: I feel, though I don't speak.
Your touch grow kindlier from week to week.
It well becomes our mutual happiness

THE BOOK OF

To go toward the same end more or less.
There is not much dissimilarity,
Not much to choose, I know it well, in fine,
Between the purposes of you and me,
And your eventual Rubbish Heap, and mine.

Harold Monro

12

Children's Song

SOMETIMES wind and sometimes rain,
Then the sun comes back again;
Sometimes rain and sometimes snow,
Goodness, how we'd like to know
Why the weather alters so.

When the weather's really good
We go nutting in the wood;
When it rains we stay at home,
And then sometimes other some
Of the neighbors' children come.

Sometimes we have jam and meat,
All the things we like to eat;
Sometimes we make do with bread
And potatoes boiled instead.
Once when we were put to bed
We had nowt and mother cried,
But that was after father died.

So, sometimes wind and sometimes rain,
Then the sun comes back again;

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Sometimes rain and sometimes snow,
Goodness, how we'd like to know
If things will *always* alter so.

Ford Madox Hueffer

13 *The Carol of the Poor Children*

WE are the poor children, come out to see the
sights
On this day of all days, on this night of nights;
The stars in merry parties are dancing in the sky,
A fine star, a new star, is shining on high!

We are the poor children, our lips are frosty blue,
We cannot sing our carol as well as rich folk do;
Our bellies are so empty we have no singing voice,
But this night of all nights good children must rejoice.

We do rejoice, we do rejoice, as hard as we can try,
A fine star, a new star, is shining in the sky!
And while we sing our carol, we think of the delight
The happy kings and shepherds make in Bethlehem
to-night.

Are we naked, mother, and are we starving-poor —
Oh, see what gifts the kings have brought outside the
stable door;
Are we cold, mother, the ass will give his hay
To make the manger warm and keep the cruel winds
away.

THE BOOK OF

We are the poor children, but not so poor who sing
Our carol with our voiceless hearts to greet the new-born king,

On this night of all nights, when in the frosty sky
A new star, a kind star, is shining on high!

Richard Middleton

14 *Wishes for My Son*

Born on St. Cecilia's Day, 1912

NOW, my son, is life for you,
And I wish you joy of it,—
Joy of power in all you do,
Deeper passion, better wit
Than I had who had enough,
Quicker life and length thereof,
More of every gift but love.

Love I have beyond all men,
Love that now you share with me —
What have I to wish you then
But that you be good and free,
And that God to you may give
Grace in stronger days to live?

For I wish you more than I
Ever knew of glorious deed,
Though no rapture passed me by
That an eager heart could heed,
Though I followed heights and sought
Things the sequel never brought:

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Wild and perilous holy things
Flaming with a martyr's blood,
And the joy that laughs and sings
Where a foe must be withstood,
Joy of headlong happy chance
Leading on the battle dance.

But I found no enemy,
No man in a world of wrong,
That Christ's word of Charity
Did not render clean and strong —
Who was I to judge my kind,
Blindest groper of the blind?

God to you may give the sight
And the clear undoubting strength
Wars to knit for single right,
Freedom's war to knit at length,
And to win, through wrath and strife,
To the sequel of my life,

But for you, so small and young,
Born on Saint Cecilia's Day,
I in more harmonious song
Now for nearer joys should pray —
Simple joys: the natural growth
Of your childhood and your youth,
Courage, innocence, and truth:

These for you, so small and young,
In your hand and heart and tongue.

Thomas MacDonagh

THE BOOK OF

15

The Two Children

“**A**H, little boy! I see
You have a wooden spade.
Into this sand you dig
So deep — for what?” I said.
“There’s more rich gold,” said he,
“Down under where I stand,
Than twenty elephants
Could move across the land.”

“Ah, little girl with wool! —
What are you making now?”
“Some stockings for a bird,
To keep his legs from snow.”
And there those children are,
So happy, small, and proud:
The boy that digs his grave,
The girl that knits her shroud.

William H. Davies

16

Quod Semper

CHILD

WHAT wind is this across the roofs so softly
makes his way,
That hardly makes the wires to sing, or soaring smokes
to sway?

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

WIND

I am a weary southern wind that blows the livelong
day
Over the stones of Babylon,
Babylon, Babylon,
The ruined walls of Babylon, all fallen in decay.

Oh, I have blown o'er Babylon when royal was her
state,
When fifty men in gold and steel kept watch at every
gate,
When merchant-men and boys and maids thronged
early by and late
Under the gates of Babylon,
Babylon, Babylon,
The marble gates of Babylon, when Babylon was great.

CHILD

Good weary wind, a little while pray let your course
be stayed,
And tell me of the talk they held and what the people
said,
The funny folk of Babylon before that they were dead,
That walked abroad in Babylon,
Babylon, Babylon,
Before the towers of Babylon along the ground were
laid.

WIND

The folk that walked in Babylon, they talked of wind
and rain,

THE BOOK OF

Of ladies' looks, of learned books, of merchants' loss
and gain,
How such-an-one loved such-a-maid that loved him
not again
(For maids were fair in Babylon),
Babylon, Babylon,
Also the poor in Babylon of hunger did complain.

CHILD

But this is what the people say as on their way they
go,
Under my window in the street, I heard them down
below.

WIND

What other should men talk about five thousand years
ago?
For men they were in Babylon,
Babylon, Babylon,
That now are dust in Babylon I scatter to-and-fro.
Lucy Lyttelton

WE children every morn would wait
For Catharine, at the garden gate;
Behind school-time, her sunny hair
Would melt the master's frown of care,
What time his hand but threatened pain,
Shaking aloft his awful cane;

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

So here one summer's morn we wait
For Catharine at the garden gate.
To Dave I say—"There's sure to be
Some coral isle unknown at sea,
And—if I see it first—'tis mine!
But I'll give it to Catharine."
"When she grows up," says Dave to me,
"Some ruler in a far countree,
Where every voice but his is dumb,
Owner of pearls, and gold, and gun,
Will build for her a shining throne,
Higher than his, and near his own;
And he, who would not list before,
Will listen to Catharine, and adore
Her face and form; and," Dave went on—
When came a man there pale and wan,
Whose face was dark and wet though kind,
He, coming there, seemed like a wind
Whose breath is rain, yet will not stop
To give the parchèd flowers a drop:
"Go, children, to your school," he said,
"And tell the master Catharine's dead."

William H. Davies

18

Eager Spring

WHIRL, snow, on the blackbird's chatter;
You will not hinder his song to come.
East wind, Sleepless, you cannot scatter
Quince-bud, almond-bud,
Little grape-hyacinth's

THE BOOK OF

Clustering brood,
Nor unfurl the tips of the plum.
No half born stalk of a lily stops;
There is sap in the storm-torn bush;
And, ruffled by gusts in a snow-blurred copse,
"Pity to wait," sings a thrush.

Love, there are few Springs left for us;
They go, and the count of them as they go
Makes surer the count that is left for us.
More than the East wind, more than the snow,
I would put back these hours that bring
Buds and bees and are lost;
I would hold the night and the frost,
To save for us one more Spring.

Gordon Bottomley

19

A Song of April

THE censer of the eglantine was moved
By little lane winds, and the watching faces
Of garden flowerets, which of old she loved,
Peep shyly outward from their silent places.
But when the sun arose the flowers grew bolder,
And she will be in white, I thought, and she
Will have a cuckoo on her either shoulder,
And woodbine twines and fragrant wings of pea.

And I will meet her on the hills of South,
And I will lead her to a northern water,
My wild one, the sweet, beautiful, uncouth,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The eldest maiden of the Winter's daughter.
And down the rainbows of her noon shall slide
Lark music, and the little sunbeam people
And nomad wings shall fill the river side,
And ground winds rocking in the lily's steeple.

Francis Ledwidge

20

Spring

EARTH like a butterfly
Leaps in gold
From its chrysalis old
And stiff and cold.
A frail pale sky
On the brink of dissolving in dreams
Covers the year's new birth;
While a passionless sun spinning beams
To recapture the heart of the earth —
Half daring, half shy,
Looking ready to die,
Like a sigh.
If a violent wind went by —
Marries earth to the sky.

The grass breaks in ripples of flowers,
In purple and chrome,
As a sea breaks in foam;
And the lilacs in fountains and showers
Of emerald rain, fling
Their tiny green buds on the wing —
Just poised on the edge of the spring —

THE BOOK OF

To fly
Bye and bye,
To burst into loveliness airily fair,
In garlands for dryads to weave in their hair,
In a virginal dance
With a scent to entrance
The sweet fickle air —
And late when the evening
Comes subtle and blue,
And stars are all opening
Hearts of bright dew —
The sun will slip easily,
Tenderly,
Bright,
Out of sight,
More silver than gold
To behold —
Not as in summer he dies,
When low in the West he lies
In the sanguine flood
Of his own heart's blood,
Shot by the shaft of the maiden moon,
With regret in his eyes
That the amazon comes too soon.

And my little son
Has run
From me
To the flowery hills, to the dappled sea;
For somebody told him that shepherds in spring
Taste the new green sap of the old green trees,
And pluck a feather from the wing

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Of a throstle
While they sing,
All together,
In a ring,
And toss it up into the breeze;
And their brains
Go mad with the ecstasy coursing their veins,
And they wreath them in violets, dance them in dew,
Till their ankles are blue,
Through and through
Enchantingly cold with sweet pains —
While the sun in the clouds
Gold-dapples the sheep,
Till the stars in bright crowds
Tempt the shepherds to sleep;
Who with eyes, wild dark,
And hair like a flame,
Singing still like the lark,
Cry loud on the name
Of each his Corinna to come and be tame
To his love,
Like a dove;

And their sheep
Turn to silver — and sleep.
And my little boy
With his young spring joy
Will not discover the leanness of truth;
With the magical,
Tragical,
Credence of youth
He will think the sane shepherds he meets on his way

THE BOOK OF

Are mad to-morrow
To his sorrow,
Or yesterday.

Hester Sainsbury

21 *Sunrise on Rydal Water*

COME down at dawn from windless hills
Into the valley of the lake,
Where yet a larger quiet fills
The hour, and mist and water make
With rocks and reeds and island boughs
One silence and one element.
Where wonder goes surely as once
It went
By Galilean prow.

Moveless the water and the mist,
Moveless the secret air above,
Hushed, as upon some happy tryst
The poised expectancy of love;
What spirit is it that adores
What mighty presence yet unseen?
What consummation works apace
Between
These rapt enchanted shores?

Never did virgin beauty wake
Devouter to the bridal feast
Than moves this hour upon the lake
In adoration to the east.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Here is the bride a god may know,
The primal will, the young consent,
Till surely upon the appointed mood
Intent

The god shall leap — and, lo,

Over the lake's end strikes the sun —
White, flameless fire; some purity
Thrilling the mist, a splendor won
Out of the world's heart. Let there be
Thoughts, and atonements, and desires;
Proud limbs, and undeliberate tongue;
Where now we move with mortal care
Among
Immortal dews and fires.

So the old mating goes apace,
Wind with the sea, and blood with thought.
Lover with lover; and the grace
Of understanding comes unsought
When stars into the twilight steer,
Or thrushes build among the may,
Or wonder moves between the hills,
And day
Comes up on Rydal mere.

John Drinkwater

THE BOOK OF

22

The Bird at Dawn

WHAT I saw was just one eye
In the dawn as I was going:
A bird can carry all the sky
In that little button glowing.

Never in my life I went
So deep into the firmament.

He was standing on a tree,
All in blossom overflowing;
And he purposely looked hard at me,
At first, as if to question merrily:
"Where are you going?"
But next some far more serious thing to say;
I could not answer, could not look away.

Oh, that hard, round, and so distracting eye:
Little mirror of all sky! —
And then the after-song another tree
Held, and sent radiating back on me.

If no man had invented human word,
And a bird-song had been
The only way to utter what we mean,
What would we men have heard,
What understood, what seen,
Between the trills and pauses, in between
The singing and the silence of a bird?

Harold Monro

23

The Kingfisher

IT was the Rainbow gave thee birth,
 And left thee all her lovely hues;
 And, as her mother's name was Tears,
 So runs it in thy blood to choose
 For haunts the lonely pools, and keep
 In company with trees that weep.

Go you and, with such glorious hues,
 Live with proud Peacocks in green parks;
 On lawns as smooth as shining glass,
 Let every feather show its mark;
 Get thee on boughs and clap thy wings
 Before the windows of proud kings.

Nay, lovely Bird, thou art not vain;
 Thou hast no proud, ambitious mind;
 I also love a quiet place
 That's green, away from all mankind;
 A lonely pool, and let a tree
 Sigh with her bosom over me.

William H. Davies

24

Netted Strawberries

I AM a willow-wren:
 I twitter in the grass on the chimney-top:
 The apples far below will never drop
 Or turn quite bright, though when

THE BOOK OF

The aimless wind is still
I stand upon the big ones and I peck
And find soft places, leaving spot and speck
When I have munched my fill.

Apples and plums I know
(Plums are dark weights and full of golden rain
That wets neck-feathers when I dip and strain,
And stickys each plummy row).

But past my well-kept trees
The quick small woman in her puffy gown,
That flutters as if its sleeves and skirts had grown
For flying and airy ease,

Has planted little bushes
Of large cool leaves that cover and shade and hide
Things redder than plums and with gold dimples pied,
Dropping on new-cut rushes.

At first I thought with spite
Such heady scent was only a flower's wide cup:
But flower-scents never made my throat close up,
And so I stood in my flight.

Yet over all there sways
A web like those revealed by dawn and dew,
But not like those that break and let me through
Shivering the drops all ways.

Though I alight and swing
I never reach the things that tumble and crush,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And if I had such long large legs as a thrush
The web would tangle and cling.

Gordon Bottomley

25

The Wind

WHY does the wind so want to be
Here in my little room with me?
He's all the world to blow about,
But just because I keep him out
He cannot be a moment still,
But frets upon my window sill,
And sometimes brings a noisy rain
To help him batter at the pane.

Upon my door he comes to knock.
He rattles, rattles at the lock
And lifts the latch and stirs the key —
Then waits a moment breathlessly,
And soon, more fiercely than before,
He shakes my little trembling door,
And though "Come in, come in!" I say,
He neither comes nor goes away.

Barefoot across the chilly floor
I run and open wide the door;
He rushes in and back again
He goes to batter door and pane,
Pleased to have blown my candle out.
He's all the world to blow about,

THE BOOK OF

Why does he want so much to be
Here in my little room with me?

Elizabeth Rendall

26

In the Country

THIS life is sweetest; in this wood
I hear no children cry for food:
I see no woman, white with care:
No man, with muscles wasting here.

No doubt it is a selfish thing
To fly from human suffering;
No doubt he is a selfish man,
Who shuns poor creatures sad and wan.

But 'tis a wretched life to face
Hunger in almost every place;
Cursed with a hand that's empty, when
The heart is full to help all men.

Can I admire the statue great,
When living men starve at its feet!
Can I admire the park's green tree,
A roof for homeless misery!

When I can see few men in need,
I then have power to help by deed,
Nor lose my cheerfulness in pity —
Which I must do in every city.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

For when I am in those great places,
I see ten thousand suffering faces:
Before me stares a wolfish eye,
Behind me creeps a groan or sigh.

William H. Davies

27 *Behind the Closed Eye*

I WALK the old frequented ways
That wind around the tangled braes,
I live again the sunny days
Ere I the city knew.

And scenes of old again are born,
The woodbine lassoing the thorn,
And drooping Ruth-like in the corn
The poppies weep the dew.

Above me in their hundred schools
The magpies bend their young to rules,
And like an apron full of jewels
The dewy cobweb swings.

And frisking in the stream below
The troutlets make the circles flow,
And the hungry crane doth watch them grow
As a smoker does his rings.

Above me smokes the little town,
With its whitewashed walls and roofs of brown

THE BOOK OF

And its octagon spire toned smoothly down
As the holy minds within.

And wondrous impudently sweet,
Half of him passion, half conceit,
The blackbird calls adown the street
Like the piper of Hamelin.

I hear him, and I feel the lure
Drawing me back to the homely moor,
I'll go and close the mountains' door
On the city's strife and din.

Francis Ledwidge

28

Wanderlust

BEYOND the East the sunrise, beyond the West
the sea,
And East and West the wanderlust that will not let
me be;
It works in me like madness, dear, to bid me say
good-by!
For the seas call and the stars call, and oh, the call
of the sky!

I know not where the white road runs, nor what the
blue hills are,
But man can have the sun for friend, and for his guide
a star;

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And there's no end of voyaging when once the voice
is heard,
For the river calls and the road calls, and oh, the call
of a bird!

Yonder the long horizon lies, and there by night and
day
The old ships draw to home again, the young ships
sail away;
And come I may, but go I must, and if men ask you
why,
You may put the blame on the stars and the sun and
the white road and the sky!

Gerald Gould

29

The South Country

WHEN I am living in the Midlands
That are sodden and unkind,
I light my lamp in the evening:
My work is left behind;
And the great hills of the South Country
Come back into my mind.

The great hills of the South Country
They stand along the sea;
And it's there walking in the high woods
That I could wish to be,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Walking along with me.

THE BOOK OF

The men that live in North England
I saw them for a day:
Their hearts are set upon the waste fells,
Their skies are fast and gray;
From their castle-walls a man may see
The mountains far away.

The men that live in West England
They see the Severn strong,
A-rolling on rough water brown
Light aspen leaves along.
They have the secret of the Rocks,
And the oldest kind of song.

But the men that live in the South Country
Are the kindest and most wise,
They get their laughter from the loud surf,
And the faith in their happy eyes
Comes surely from our Sister the Spring
When over the sea she flies;
The violets suddenly bloom at her feet,
She blesses us with surprise.

I never get between the pines
But I smell the Sussex air;
Nor I never come on a belt of sand
But my home is there.
And along the sky the line of the Downs
So noble and so bare.

A lost thing could I never find,
Nor a broken thing mend:

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And I fear I shall be all alone
When I get towards the end.
Who will there be to comfort me
Or who will be my friend?

I will gather and carefully make my friends
Of the men of the Sussex Weald,
They watch the stars from silent folds,
They stiffly plough the field.
By them and the God of the South Country
My poor soul shall be healed.

If I ever become a rich man,
Or if ever I grow to be old,
I will build a house with deep thatch
To shelter me from the cold,
And there shall the Sussex songs be sung
And the story of Sussex told.

I will hold my house in the high wood
Within a walk of the sea,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Shall sit and drink with me.

Hilaire Belloc

30 *I Am the Mountainy Singer*

I AM the mountainy singer —
The voice of the peasant's dream,
The cry of the wind on the wooded hill,
The leap of the fish in the stream.

THE BOOK OF

Quiet and love I sing —
The cairn on the mountain crest,
The cailin in her lover's arms,
The child at its mother's breast.

Beauty and peace I sing —
The fire on the open hearth,
The caill each spinning at her wheel,
The plough in the broken earth.

Travail and pain I sing —
The bride on the childing bed,
The dark man laboring at his rhymes,
The ewe in the lambing shed.

Sorrow and death I sing —
The canker come on the corn,
The fisher lost in the mountain loch,
The cry at the mouth of morn.

No other life I sing,
For I am sprung of the stock
That broke the hilly land for bread,
And built the nest in the rock!
Seosamh MacCathmhaoil (Joseph Campbell)

AGES long the hills have stood
A solitary brotherhood,
Ages long with sinews bare
They have shouldered the keen air,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

They have wrestled with the skies
Hiddenly for a dark prize.

Merry Spring with her wanton train
Tiptoes, tiptoes by in vain;
Ye, O hills, never behold
Her brave dust of green and gold
Flashing by, the pride, the mirth,
The myriad fluttering of the earth.

This wild magic ye have lost —
Tell me, at so bitter cost,
What the guerdon ye have won?

“Speech with the moon, speech with the sun;
Valiancy to meet unbowed
The challenge of the thundercloud,
And, to quicken us for fresh wars,
Gay communion with the stars!”

George Rostrevor

32

Reciprocity

I DO not think that skies and meadows are
Moral, or that the fixture of a star
Comes of a quiet spirit, or that trees
Have wisdom in their windless silences.
Yet these are things invested in my mood
With constancy, and peace, and fortitude,
That in my troubled season I can cry
Upon the wide composure of the sky,

THE BOOK OF

And envy fields, and wish that I might be
As little daunted as a star or tree.

John Drinkwater

33

Magic

I LOVE a still conservatory
That's full of giant, breathless palms,
Azaleas, clematis and vines,
Whose quietness great Trees becalms
Filling the air with foliage,
A curved and dreamy statuary.

I like to hear a cold, pure rill
Of water trickling low, afar
With sudden little jerks and purls
Into a tank or stoneware jar,
The song of a tiny sleeping bird
Held like a shadow in its trill.

I love the mossy quietness
That grows upon the great stone flags,
The dark tree-ferns, the staghorn ferns,
The prehistoric, antlered stags
That carven stand and stare among
The silent, ferny wilderness.

And are they birds or souls that flit
Among the trees so silently?
And are they fish or ghosts that haunt
The still pools of the rockery? —

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

For I am but a sculptured rock
As in that magic place I sit.

Still as a great jewel is the air
With boughs and leaves smooth-carved in it,
And rocks and trees and giant ferns,
And blooms with inner radiance lit,
And naked water like a nymph
That dances, tireless, slim and bare.

I watch a white Nyanza float
Upon a green, untroubled pool,
A fairyland Ophelia, she
Has cast herself in water cool,
And lies while fairy cymbals ring,
Drowned in her fairy castle moat.

The goldfish sing a winding song
Below her pale and waxen face,
The water-nymph is dancing by,
Lifting smooth arms with mournful grace,
A stainless white dream she floats on
While fairies beat a fairy gong.

Silent the Cattleyas blaze
And thin red orchid shapes of Death
Peer savagely with twisted lips
Sucking an eerie, phantom breath
With that bright, spotted, fever'd lust
That watches lonely travellers craze.

THE BOOK OF

Gigantic, mauve and hairy leaves
Hang like obliterated faces
Full of dim unattained expression,
Such as haunts virgin forest places
When Silence leaps among the trees
And the echoing heart deceives.

W. J. Turner

34

Stone Trees

LAST night a sword-light in the sky
Flashed a swift terror on the dark.
In that sharp light the fields did lie
Naked and stone-like; each tree stood
Like a tranced woman, bound and stark.
Far off the wood
With darkness ridged the riven dark.

And cows astonied stared with fear,
And sheep crept to the knees of cows,
And conies to their burrows slid,
And rooks were still in rigid boughs,
And all things else were still or hid.
From all the wood
Came but the owl's hoot, ghostly, clear.

In that cold trance the earth was held
It seemed, an age, or time was nought.
Sure never from that stone-like field
Sprang golden corn, nor from those chill

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Grey granite trees was music wrought.
In all the wood
Even the tall poplar hung stone still.

It seemed an age, or time was none . . .
Slowly the earth heaved out of sleep
And shivered, and the trees of stone
Bent and sighed in the gusty wind,
And rain swept as birds flocking sweep.
Far off the wood
Rolled the slow thunders on the wind.

From all the wood came no brave bird,
No song broke through the close-fall'n night,
Nor any sound from cowering herd:
Only a dog's long lonely howl
When from the window poured pale light.
And from the wood
The hoot came ghostly of the owl.

John Freeman

35 *If I Should Ever by Chance*

IF I should ever by chance grow rich
I'll buy Codham, Cockridden, and Childerditch,
Roses, Pyrigo, and Lapwater,
And let them all to my elder daughter.
The rent I shall ask of her will be only
Each year's first violets, white and lonely,
The first primroses and orchises —
She must find them before I do, that is.

THE BOOK OF

But if she finds a blossom on furze
Without rent they shall all for ever be hers,
Codham, Cockridden, and Childerditch,
Roses, Pyrgo, and Lapwater,—
I shall give them all to my elder daughter.

Edward Thomas

36

What Shall I Give?

WHAT shall I give my daughter the younger
More than will keep her from cold and hunger?
I shall not give her anything.
If she shared South Weald and Havering,
Their acres, the two brooks running between
Paine's Brook and Weald Brook,
With peewit, woodpecker, swan, and rook,
She would be no richer than the queen
Who once on a time sat in Havering Bower
Alone, with the shadows, pleasure and power.
She could do no more with Samarcand,
Or the mountains of a mountain land,
And its far white house above cottages,
Like Venus above the Pleiades.
Her small hands I would not cumber
With so many acres and their lumber,
But leave her Steep and her own world
And her spectacled self with hair uncurled,
Wanting a thousand little things
That time without contentment brings.

Edward Thomas

IF I were to own this countryside
 As far as a man in a day could ride,
 And the Tyes were mine for giving or letting,—
 Wingle Tye and Margaretting
 Tye, and Skreens, Gooshays, and Cockerells,
 Shellow, Rochetts, Bandish, and Pickerells,
 Martins, Lambkins, and Lillyputs,
 Their copses, ponds, roads, and ruts,
 Fields where plough-horses steam and plovers
 Fling and whimper, hedges that lovers
 Love, and orchards, shrubberies, walls
 Where the sun untroubled by north wind falls,
 And single trees where the thrush sings well
 His proverbs untranslatable,
 I would give them all to my son
 If he would let me any one
 For a song, a blackbird's song, at dawn.
 He would have no more, till on my lawn
 Never a one was left, because I
 Had shot them to put them into a pie,—
 His Essex blackbirds, every one,
 And I was left old and alone.

Then unless I could pay, for rent, a song
 As sweet as a blackbird's, and as long —
 No more — he should have the house, not I:
 Margaretting or Wingle Tye,
 Or it might be Skreens, Gooshays, or Cockerells,

THE BOOK OF

Shellow, Rochetts, Bandish, or Pickerells,
Martins, Lambkins, or Lillyputs,
Should be his till the cart tracks had no ruts.

Edward Thomas

38

And You, Helen

AND you, Helen, what should I give you?
So many things I would give you
Had I an infinite great store
Offered me and I stood before
To choose. I would give you youth,
All kinds of loveliness and truth,
A clear eye as good as mine,
Lands, waters, flowers, wine,
As many children as your heart
Might wish for, a far better art
Than mine can be, all you have lost
Upon the travelling waters tossed
Or given to me. If I could choose
Freely in that great treasure-house
Anything from any shelf,
I would give you back yourself,
And power to discriminate
What you want and want it not too late,
Many fair days free from care
And heart to enjoy both foul and fair,
And myself, too, if I could find
Where it lay hidden and it proved kind.

Edward Thomas

IN a cool curving world he lies
 And ripples with dark ecstasies.
 The kind luxurious lapse and steal
 Shapes all his universe to feel
 And know and be; the clinging stream
 Closes his memory, glooms his dream,
 Who lips the roots o' the shore, and glides
 Superb on unreturning tides.
 Those silent waters weave for him
 A fluctuant mutable world and dim,
 Where wavering masses bulge and gape
 Mysterious, and shape to shape
 Dies momentarily through whorl and hollow,
 And form and line and solid follow
 Solid and line and form to dream
 Fantastic down the eternal stream;
 An obscure world, a shifting world,
 Bulbous, or pulled to thin, or curled,
 Or serpentine, or driving arrows,
 Or serene sliding, or March narrows,
 There slipping wave and shore are one,
 And weed and mud. No ray of sun,
 But glow to glow fades down the deep
 (As dream to unknown dream in sleep);
 Shaken translucency illumines
 The hyaline of drifting glooms;
 The strange soft-handed depth subdues
 Drowned colour there, but black to hues,

THE BOOK OF

As death to living, decomposes—
Red darkness of the heart of roses,
Blue brilliant from dead starless skies,
And gold that lies behind the eyes,
The unknown unnameable sightless white
That is the essential flame of night,
Lusterless purple, hooded green,
The myriad hues that lie between
Darkness and darkness! . . .

And all's one,
Gentle, embracing, quiet, dun,
The world he rests in, world he knows,
Perpetual curving. Only — grows
And eddy in that ordered falling
A knowledge from the gloom, a calling
Weed in the wave, gleam in the mud —
The dark fire leaps along his blood;
Dateless and deathless, blind and still,
The intricate impulse works its will;
His woven world drops back; and he,
Sans providence, sans memory,
Unconscious and directly driven
Fades to some dank sufficient heaven.

O world of lips, O world of laughter,
Where hope is fleet and thought flies after,
Of lights in the clear night, of cries
That drift along the wave and rise
Thin to the glittering stars above,
You know the hands, the eyes of love!

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The strife of limbs, the sightless clinging,
The infinite distance, and the singing
Blown by the wind, a flame of sound,
The gleam, the flowers, and vast around
The horizon, and the heights above —
You know the sigh, the song of love!

But there the night is close, and there
Darkness is cold and strange and bare;
And the secret deeps are whisperless;
And rhythm is all deliciousness;
And joy is in the throbbing tide.
Whose intricate fingers treat and glide
In felt bewildering harmonies
Of trembling touch; and music is
The exquisite knocking of the blood.
Space is no more, under the mud;
His bliss is older than the sun.
Silent and straight the waters run.
The lights, the cries, the willows dim,
And the dark tide are one with him.

Rupert Brooke

40

Mole

TUNNELLED in solid blackness creeps,
The old mole-soul and wakes or sleeps,
He knows not which, but tunnels on
Through ages of oblivion,
Until at last the long constraint

THE BOOK OF

Of each handwall is lost and faint;
Comes daylight creeping from afar;
And mole-work grows crepuscular.
Tunnel meets air and bursts; mole sees
Men hugely walking . . . or are they trees?
And far horizons smoking blue
And wandering clouds for ever new,
Green hills, like lighted lamps aglow
Or quenching 'neath the cloud-shadow.
Quenching and blazing turn by turn
Spring's great green signals fitfully burn.
Mole travels on, but finds the steering
A harder task of pioneering
Than when he thriddled through the strait,
Blind catacombs that ancient fate
Had carved for him. Stupid and dumb
And blind and touchless he had come
A way without a turn; but here
Under the sky the passenger
Chooses his own best way, and mole
Distracted wanders; yet his hole
Regrets not much wherein he crept
But runs, a joyous nympholept,
This way and that, by all made mad:
River nymph and Oread,
Ocean's daughters, and Lorelei
Combing the silken mystery,
The glaucous gold of her rivery tresses . . .
Each haunts the traveller, each possesses
The drunken wavering soul awhile,
Then with a phantom's cock-crow smile
Mocks craving with sheer vanishment.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Mole-eyes grow hawk's; knowledge is lent
In grudging dribblets that pay high
Unconscionable usury
To relenting life. Mole learns
To travel more secure; the turns
Of his long way less puzzling seem
And all those magic forms that gleam
In airy invitation cheat
Less often than they did of old.
The earth slopes upward, fold on fold
Of quiet hills that meet the gold
Serenity of western skies.
Over the world's edge with clear eyes
Our mole transcendent sees his way
Tunnelled in light. He must obey
Necessity again and thrice
Close catacombs as erst he did,
Fate's tunnellings himself must bore
Through the sunset's inmost core.
The guiding walls to each hand shine
Luminous and crystalline;
And mole shall tunnel on and on
Till night let fall oblivion.

Aldous L. Huxley

41

The Bull

SEE an unhappy bull,
Sick in soul and body both,
Slouching in the undergrowth

THE BOOK OF

Of the forest beautiful,
Banished from the herd he led,
Bulls and cows a thousand head

Cranes and gaudy parrots go
Up and down the burning sky;
Tree-top cats purr drowsily
In the dim-day green below;
And troops of monkeys, nutting, some,
All disputing, go and come;

And things abominable sit
Picking offal buck or swine,
On the mess and over it
Burnished flies and beetles shine
And spiders big as bladders lie
Under hemlocks ten foot high;

And a dotted serpent curled
Round and round and round a tree,
Yellowing its greenery,
Keeps a watch on all the world,
All the world and this old bull
In the forest beautiful.

Bravely by his fall he came:
One he led, a bull of blood
Newly come to lustihood,
Fought and put his prince to shame
Snuffed and pawed the prostrate head
Tameless even while it bled.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

There they left him, every one,
Left him there without a lick,
Left him for the birds to pick,
Left him there for carrion,
Vilely from their bosom cast
Wisdom, worth and love at last.

When the lion left his lair
And roared his beauty through the hills,
And the vultures pecked their quills
And flew into the middle air,
Then this prince no more to reign
Came to life and lived again.

He snuffed the herd in far retreat,
He saw the blood upon the ground,
And snuffed the burning airs around
Still with beevish odours sweet,
While the blood ran down his head
And his mouth ran slaver red.

Pity him, this fallen chief,
All his splendour, all his strength
All his body's breadth and length
Dwindled down with shame and grief,
Half the bull he was before,
Bones and leather, nothing more.

See him standing dewlap-deep
In the rushes at the lake,
Surly, stupid, half asleep,
Waiting for his heart to break

THE BOOK OF

And the birds to join the flies
Feasting at his bloodshot eyes,—

Standing with his head hung down
In a stupor, dreaming things:
Green savannas, jungles brown,
Battlefields and bellowings,
Bulls undone and lions dead
And vultures flapping overhead.

Dreaming things: of days he spent
With his mother gaunt and lean
In the valley warm and green,
Full of baby wonderment,
Blinking out of silly eyes
At a hundred mysteries;

Dreaming over once again
How he wandered with a throng
Of bulls and cows a thousand strong,
Wandered on from plain to plain,
Up the hill and down the dale,
Always at his mother's tail;

How he lagged behind the herd,
Lagged and tottered, weak of limb,
And she turned and ran to him,
Blaring at the loathly bird
Stationed always in the skies
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Dreaming maybe of a day
When her drained and drying paps
Turned him to the sweets and saps,
Richer fountains by the way,
And she left the bull she bore
And he looked to her no more ;

And his little frame grew stout,
And his little legs grew strong
And the way was not so long ;
And his little horns came out,
And he played at butting trees
And boulder-stones and tortoises,

Joined a game of knobby skulls
With the youngsters of his year,
All the other little bulls,
Learning both to bruise and bear,
Learning how to stand a shock
Like a little bull of rock.

Dreaming of a day less dim,
Dreaming of a time less far,
When the faint but certain star
Of destiny burned clear for him,
And a fierce and wild unrest
Broke the quiet of his breast,

And the gristles of his youth
Hardened in his comely pow,
And he came to fighting growth,
Beat his bull and won his cow,

THE BOOK OF

And flew his tail and trampled off
Passed the tallest, vain enough,

And curved about in splendour full
And curved again and snuffed the airs
As who should say Come out who dares!
And all beheld a bull, a Bull,
And knew that here was surely one
That backed for no bull, fearing none.

And the leader of the herd
Looked and saw, and beat the ground,
And shook the forest with his sound,
Bellowed at the loathly bird
Stationed always in the skies
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

Dreaming, this old bull forlorn,
Surely dreaming of the hour
When he came to sultan power,
And they owned him master-horn,
Chiefest bull of all among
Bulls and cows a thousand strong;

And in all the tramping herd
Not a bull that barred his way,
Not a cow that said him nay,
Not a bull or cow that erred
In the furnace of his look,
Dared a second, worse rebuke:

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Not in all the forest wide,
Jungle, thicket, pasture, fen,
Not another dared him then,
Dared him and again defied;
Not a sovereign buck or boar
Came a second time for more;

Not a serpent that survived
Once the terrors of his hoof
Risked a second time reproof,
Came a second time and lived,
Not a serpent in its skin
Came again for discipline;

Not a leopard bright as flame,
Flashing fingerhooks of steel,
That a wooden tree might feel,
Met his fury once and came
For a second reprimand,
Not a leopard in the land;

Not a lion of them all,
Not a lion of the hills,
Hero of a thousand kills,
Dared a second fight and fall,
Dared that ram terrific twice,
Paid a second time the price. . . .

Pity him, this dupe of dream,
Leader of the herd again
Only in his daft old brain,
Once again the bull supreme

THE BOOK OF

And bull enough to bear the part
Only in his tameless heart.

Pity him that he must wake;
Even now the swarm of flies
Blackening his bloodshot eyes
Bursts and blusters round the lake,
Scattered from the feast half-fed,
By great shadows overhead.

And the dreamer turns away
From his visionary herds
And his splendid yesterday,
Turns to meet the loathly birds
Flocking round him from the skies,
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

Ralph Hodgson

42

Bodily Beauty

HER curving bosom images
A tender-folded thought
Whose grace, too exquisite for speech,
Was in her body wrought.

The shining vale between her breasts
Is like a quiet joy,
Such as no malison can harm
Nor any shade annoy.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Yea, all her bodily beauty is
A subtle-fashioned scroll,
Where God has written visibly
Brave hintings of her soul.

George Rostrevor

43 *Any Lover, Any Lass*

WHY are her eyes so bright, so bright,
Why do her lips control
The kisses of a summer night,
When I would love her soul?

God set her brave eyes wide apart
And painted them with fire;
They stir the ashes of my heart
To embers of desire.

Her lips so tenderly are wrought
In so divine a shape
That I am servant to my thought
And can nowise escape.

Her body is a flower, her hair
About her neck doth play;
I find her colors everywhere,
They are the pride of day.

Her little hands are soft, and when
I see her fingers move

THE BOOK OF

I know in very truth that men
Have died for less than love.

Ah, dear, live, lovely thing! my eyes
Have sought her like a prayer;
It is my better self that cries,
"Would she were not so fair!"

Would I might forfeit ecstasy
And find a calmer place,
Where I might undesirous see
Her too desired face.

Nor feel her eyes so bright, so bright,
Nor hear her lips unroll
Dream after dream the lifelong night,
When I would love her soul.

Richard Middleton

44 "Bid Adieu to Girlish Days"

BID adieu, adieu, adieu,
Bid adieu to girlish days,
Happy Love is come to woo
Thee and woo thy girlish ways —
The zone that doth become thee fair,
The snood upon thy yellow hair.

When thou hast heard his name upon
The bugles of the cherubim,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Begin thou softly to unzone
Thy girlish bosom unto him,
And softly to undo the snood
That is the sign of maidenhood.

James Joyce

45

Love Came to Us

LOVE came to us in time gone by
When one at twilight shyly played
And one in fear was standing nigh
For Love at first is all afraid.

We were grave lovers. Love is past.
That had his sweet hours many a one;
Welcome to us now at the last
The ways that we shall go upon.

James Joyce

46

After Two Years

SHE is all so slight
And tender and white
As a May morning.
She walks without hood
At dusk. It is good
To hear her sing.

It is God's will
That I shall love her still

THE BOOK OF

As He loves Mary.
And night and day
I will go forth to pray
That she love me.

She is as gold
Lovely, and far more cold.
Do thou pray with me,
For if I win grace
To kiss twice her face
God has done well to me.

Richard Aldington

47 *A Song of Woman's Smiling*

I HAVE the freedom of my mouth
As never yet till now;
Being grey-haired, I may be the South
Of womanhood's warm brow
Above a smiling-out that beams
On all my world from deepening dreams.

My head is all a-blossomy
With snows of coming fruit;
My heart is like an orchard tree
A-bud with growth's pursuit:
I in strange places to strange eyes
May verily smile angelwise.

Yea, I may be to men a grace
Of what in me is bright,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

By the clear-shining of my face,
In meekest wisdom's right;
Because in me there is no maid,
Nor minx, of whom to be afraid.

I do not seek them; no sweet veil
Of girlhood's modesty
Is fine as this through which I hail
Their hearts with sympathy —
Knit of the sunned hours and the rains —
Dear weather of life's joys and pains.

With all my Love's love in my years,
My breath flowers as the sod;
I am daisied with joy's bloom from tears,
Like a little field of God;
By every smile's ray that unfurls
I am younger than all glad, sweet girls.

Something like Aaron's rod I shine,
To the world's eyes increased
As proof mysteriously divine
My dear Love is God's Priest,
Whose hallowing of my mouth's control
Makes me a smiling of his soul.

Yea, I am girlhood's verity
In womanhood made truth
As wisdom that is ecstasy;
Men feel my spirit's youth
Smiles into such a happy light
From God's touch, while my hair turns white.

THE BOOK OF

Yea, even as angelhood it feels,
Sometimes, for Heaven to show
This freshness which my freedom seals:—
My God! I thank Thee so
For giving my soul's smiles to me
In such a precious liberty.

May Doney.

48

To My Wife

WHEN sere has touched the leaf with age
And Time brings Leisure's glow,
Turn softly o'er this scribbled page
And learn the things I know.
If in the waning summer night
A fragrance lightly blows,
When winds remember roses bright,
Think to yourself . . . He knows.

When sleeps the regal sire of day
In western glory red,
And lazy, crawling mists betray
The winding river's bed,
When moor birds call, and night birds cry,
And night scents fill the air
From winds that know where thyme-beds lie,
Think to yourself . . . He's there.

When day with evening fondly parts
Along the gorsy hills,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And tawny dusk a veil imparts
O'er little bogland rills,
Turn to the thoughts of yesterday
Among the cool green groves,
And think that always and for aye
As well as now . . . He loves.

Yet there will come a time when I,
Dear heart, shall leave your side
As stars fade quietly from the sky
When dawn wins day for bride:
Scent of the fragrant birk and briar
May fail their round to steer,
Think to yourself — though worlds in fire
May perish . . . He is here.

James C. Welsh

49

C. L. M.

IN the dark womb where I began
My mother's life made me a man.
Through all the months of human birth
Her beauty fed my common earth.
I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,
But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave
She cannot see the life she gave.
For all her love, she cannot tell
Whether I use it ill or well,

THE BOOK OF

Nor knock at dusty doors to find
Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,
She would not know her little son,
I am so grown. If we should meet
She would pass by me in the street,
Unless my soul's face let her see
My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind
My debt to her and womankind?
What woman's happier life repays
Her for those months of wretched days?
For all my mouthless body leached
Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said
In thanks to that dear woman dead?
Men triumph over women still,
Men trample women's rights at will,
And man's lust roves the world untamed.

O grave, keep shut lest I be shamed.

John Masefield

50 *The Mandrake's Horrid Scream*

WHY ain't the Mester back?
Down these owd Fens there ain't noa neigh-
bours,
An' when he's finished wi' his labours,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

He gallops off full crack!
I sits aloan an' shaakes wi' fear
While he be rousin' at the "Deer."
Them what's in towns has niver tried
To live aloan, all terrified;
They talk about churchyards at night,
Or things wi' chains dressed up in white:
Why! Bless my soul! I'd gladly sleep
In any place what made them creep!
Coz allers they've a friend about
To hear if they should give a shout!
They dunno what it is to fear
But — here —
What's that?
Only the cat!
An' she's as black as Death's own self,
She squats all loathly on yon shelf,
Wi' one unwinkin' eye on me
I wish the Devil —
No!
Not *Hc!*
I didn't mean to mention names,
Nor interfere wi' others' gaames:
They saay as cats is really witches,
Like Betty Williamson, now dead,
What uster wear her husband's breeches
An' ate the queerest food, foak said;
She set beside her open door
Wi' one foot allers off the floor,
Quietly knitting; one eye cast
To overlook yóu as you passed;
An' just the same, yon nasty critter

THE BOOK OF

Stares at me now that soft an' bitter!
Oh, Dear! I wish my man would come!
May ague twist, an' strike him dumb!
May fairies nip his liver out
An' leave him nare a tongue to shout.
Forsaking me, all loansome here
With iverything what's wrong and queer.

From out my winder, where I sit
I see the willows round yon pit:
Dark Pit where Moller Homes was found
As some said,—accidental drowned!—
But I heard screechin', terrified,
About the time he must a died.
Having noa bottom, soa they say;
Its dreadful secrets there must stay
Until the Resurrection Day!
Oh where the Devil is that Tom?
I'll give him "pub" when he gits hoam:
The wind is moanin' round that Pit
As if somebody wished to flit:
There's Things in there what stirs by night
An' if you see, yer hair turns white;
Around, they say, the Mandrake grows
What's pulled at dead of night by *those*
Who little care although it screams
To wake poor mortals from their dreams.
Our parson tells of Powers Evil:
(An' Providence can't beat the Devil)
Where should they laay, but in yon Pit?
What makes me squirl to think on it:
All gashly arms a-reachin' out

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

To clamber up yer water spout
An' reach you through —
Oh Lor!
Who's that?
'Tis something comin'
I hear it hummin' . . .

My dear good Tom! Thank God it's him!
I was afraid of something grim —
I've bin a-wantin' you soa long —
You lousy mawkin', stinkin' strong
Of beer an' bacca! Off to bed!
I'll larn yer, Thomas, who you've wed:
'Fore morn, you'll wish as you was dead.

Bernard Gilbert

51 *An Old Woman of the Roads*

O to have a little house!
To own the hearth and stool and all!
The heaped up sods upon the fire,
The pile of turf against the wall!

To have a clock with weights and chains
And pendulum swinging up and down!
A dresser filled with shining delft,
Speckled and white and blue and brown!

I could be busy all the day
Clearing and sweeping hearth and floor,

THE BOOK OF

And fixing on their shelf again
My white and blue and speckled store!

I could be quiet there at night
Besides the fire and by myself,
Sure of a bed and loth to leave
The ticking cloth and the shining delft!

Och! but I'm weary of mist and dark,
And roads where there's never a house nor bush,
And tired I am of bog and road,
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!

And I am praying to God on high,
And I am praying Him night and day,
For a little house—a house of my own—
Out of the wind's and the rain's way.

Padraic Colum

52 *Old Woman Forever Sitting*

OLD woman forever sitting
Alone in the large hotel under the fans,
Infinitely alone where around you spin
So many lives like painted tops,
Smearing the void a moment with their hues,
Giddily catching at balance as they pause.
What crime was yours, old woman,
What sin against the Earth
That she should give you now

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

A cap of dust and furrows on your cheeks,
And at the end
A hole dug in the mould?
Is death the promise of Fate's last rebound,
Revenge of Time that waits within the clock
And laughs awry at life,
For a kiss, for a dream, for a child that you bore,
For a fresh rose pinned to your bosom?
The owl is in your spirit,
Blinking through the oldest tree of wisdom —
And now your fingers are weaving
The cold pale invisible blossoms of death
Into a waxen wreath,
And Time
Sits down beside you knitting with quick hands
Grey counterpanes to cover up a grave!

Iris Tree

53

No Wife

TOM! Tom! What yer think?
I've 'ed the Parson's wife
The first time in 'er life, acrost our door!

What for?

What for? Why, Tom, you'd niver niver guess!
Not if you lived as old as Grammer Bess
What's lately swore
She's a hunder an' four —
She wants us two, to go off an' git spliced!

THE BOOK OF

Oh Christ!
What's got 'er now:
The cow!

You well may swear;
Coz 'ow she dare — an' why —
Will make you swear agen, or laugh — surelie!
Just light yer pipe
Now you look comfortable — so
You're rough — old Tom — I know —
Black as a crow!
But I'm fond on yer lad
As any fool could see!
An' whether we're good or bad
You've bin maain good ter me.

But — blast 'er silly eyes!
What yer say to 'er, then?

I said a lot!
I telled 'er what!
A-comin' 'ere wi' 'er fancy airs,
'Er what's never known no cares,
Lookin' that wise —
Just coz she caught a Parson!
(An' noa great shaakes ayther —
She'd nowt of a feyther
While 'er half-brother run away to sea
An' took to blue water
Wi' their ole cook's daughter)
"You talk of 'sin' an' 'shame,'" I sez, "to me?
You talks just like a fool

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Or a silly bairn at school
Coz nobody about could doubt,
But what we're happy together him an' me;
Just look," I sez, "at any in this street
What couple can you find about to beat
My Tom an' me what's bin together years,
Happy an' comfortable;
Never noa serious trouble —
Nuthin' I mean to set us by the ears —
Good reason why!"
I sez — sez I —
"Coz we're a free an' equal pair;
We got to treat each other fair
Or else we part."

Well said now, Missus! That were smart!

"To part!" sez she, "lookin' all down her noaz,
"Ow could you leave your hoam wi' childer three?
I sez — sez I — "that didn't bother me
Coz I can earn enough for food an' cloaz.
I can maintain 'em by mysen," sez I,
"An' would at any time o' day.
I'm not a slave — an' anyway
I'd manage if I 'ed to do,
I'm not a slave," I sez, "like you!"

You didn't — Come! —

I did — I did! —

I meant it too.

"If your man turns up stunt," sez I,

THE BOOK OF

" You can't goa off, or let him fly;
You can't maintain yoursen — not you! —
Lettin' aloan the bairns, you ain't!
(That made her squirm all down her back!)
'Ow could you wok up on a stack?
Or yok a hoss or bake or wesh?
If your man drinks or starts to thresh
You couldn't leave him coz he holds yer:
You're tied by laws and friends what scolds yer:
Yer ain't like me, as free as air.
I'm not afraid whoever stare,
Nayther is Tom!
We minds oursens
An' thinks noa more of foaks than hens,
Coz if I doant behave mysen —
Or him —
We parts! "—
Why doant we?
Why?
Becoz we're free an' happy here,
Becoz we treats each other fair!"

You give `er the rough of yer tongue, old gel,
But — what a sell!

Comin' `ere to ride rough shod
Coz she's a "wife."
Why — bless my life
She doesn't know she's born:
She couldn't find her own corn!
I sent `er off wi' a flea in er ear!
An will again if she dost come near!

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

But she weant!
The white faced critter —
Wi a noaz like a knife
An' a smile that bitter
As if she would kill.
A wife!
What does she know of life? —
Nowt!
Nor ever will! —
But tomorrer's Sunday
An' we'll go to Church!

What?

Yes! Just for once; an' sit together,
Like birds of a feather!
We ain't ashamed to show our faces
To them what thinks we be disgraces.
We'll goa together Tom — for sure
We'll goa this once an' then noa more —
If you be willin'?

Aye, lass — I'm willin' —
I'll back you up as I've allers done,
Agen Parson's wife or anyone.
Aye; agen all the country round,
Coz you're as good as could be found —
An' now — old gel — it's omost eight,
Come on yer know we moant be late,
Off to the Ship for our glass of aale;
This yarn of yourn'll make a taale!
What's that — yer bunnet?

THE BOOK OF

All rate . . . be quick —
I'll wait for yer agen the gate.

Bernard Gilbert.

54

Marriage Song

1

COME up, dear chosen morning, come,
Blessing the air with light,
And bid the sky repent of being dark:
Let all the spaces round the world be white,
And give the earth her green again.
Into new hours of beautiful delight,
Out of the shadow where she has lain,
Bring the earth awake for glee,
Shining with dew as fresh and clear
As my beloved's voice upon the air.
For now, O morning chosen of all days, on thee
A wondrous duty lies:
There was an evening that did loveliness foretell,
Thence upon thee, O chosen morn, it fell
To fashion into perfect destiny
The radiant prophecy.
For in an evening of young moon, that went
Filling the moist air with a rosy fire,
I and my beloved knew our love;
And knew that thou, O morning, wouldst arise
To give us knowledge of achieved desire.
For, standing stricken with astonishment,
Half terrified with delight,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Even as the moon did into clear air move
And made a golden light,
Lo there, croucht up against it, a dark hill,
A monstrous back of earth, a spine
Of hunched rock, furred with great growth of pine,
Lay like a beast, snout in its paws, asleep;
Yet in its sleeping seemed it miserable,
As though strong fear must always keep
Hold of its heart, and drive its blood in dream.
Yea, for to our new love, did it not seem,
That dark and quiet length of hill,
The sleeping grief of the world? — Out of it we
Had like imaginations stept to be
Beauty and golden wonder; and for the lovely fear
Of coming perfect joy, had changed
The terror that dreamt there!
And now the golden moon had turned
To shining white, white as our souls that burned
With vision of our prophecy assured:
Suddenly white was the moon; but she
At once did on a woven modesty
Of cloud, and soon went in obscured:
And we were dark, and vanisht that strange hill.
But yet it was not long before
There opened in the sky a narrow door,
Made with pearl lintel and pearl sill;
And the earth's night see'd pressing there.—
All as a beggar on some festival would peer,—
To gaze into a room of light beyond,
The hidden silver splendour of the moon.
Yea, and we also, we
Long gazed wistfully

THE BOOK OF

Towards thee, O morning, come at last,
And towards the light that thou wilt pour upon us soon !

II

O soul who still art strange to sense,
Who often against beauty wouldst complain,
Doubting between joy and pain:
If like the startling touch of something keen
Against thee, it hath been
To follow from an upland height
The swift sun hunting rain
Across the April meadows of a plain,
Until the fields would flash into the air
Their joyous green, like emeralds alight,
Or when in the blue of night's mid-noon
The burning naked moon
Draws to a brink of cloudy weather near,
A breadth of snow, firm and soft as a wing,
Stretcht out over a wind that gently goes,—
Through the white sleep of snowy cloud there grows
An azure-border'd shining ring,
The gleaming dream of the approaching joy of her ; —
What now wilt thou do, Soul? What now,
If with such things as these troubled thou wert?
How wilt thou now endure, or how
Not now be strangely hurt? —
When utter beauty must come closer to thee
Than even anger or fear could be;
When thou, like metal in a kiln, must lie
Seized by beauty's mightily able flame;
Enjoyed by beauty as by the ruthless glee

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Of an unescapable power;
Obeying beauty as air obeys a cry;
Yea, one thing made of beauty and thee,
As steel and a white heat are made the same!
— Ah, but I know how this infirmity
Will fail and be not, no, not memory,
When I begin the marvellous hour.
This only is my heart's strain'd eagerness,
Long waiting for its bliss,—
But from those other fears, from those
That keep to Love so close,
From fears that are the shadow of delight,
Hide me, O joys; make them unknown to night!

III

Thou bright God that in dream camest to me last
night,
Thou with the flesh made of a golden light,
Knew I not thee, thee and thy heart,
Knew I not well, God, who thou wert?
Yea, and my soul divinely understood
The light what was beneath thee a ground,
The golden light that cover'd thee round,
Turning my sleep to a fiery morn,
Was as a heavenly oath there sworn
Promising me an immortal good:
Well I knew thee, God of Marriages, thee and thy
flame!
Ah, but wherefore beside thee came
That fearful sight of another mood?
Why in thy light, to thy hand chained,

THE BOOK OF

Towards me its bondage terribly strained,
Why came with thee that dreadful hound,
The wild hound Fear, black, ravenous and gaunt?
Why him with thee should thy dear light surround?
Why broughtest thou that beast to haunt
The blissful footsteps of my golden dream?—
All shadowy black the body dread,
All frenzied fire the head,—
The hunger of its mouth a hollow crimson flame,
The hatred in its eyes ablaze
Fierce and green, stabbing the ruddy glaze,
And sharp white jetting fire the teeth snarl'd at me,
And white the dribbling rage of froth,—
A throat that gaped to bay and paws working violently,
Yet soundless all as a winging moth:
Tugging towards me, famishing for my heart;—
Even while thou, O golden god, were still
Looking the beautiful kindness of thy will
Into my soul, even then must I be,
With thy bright promise looking at me,
Then bitterly of that hound afraid?—
Darkness, I know, attendeth bright,
And light comes not but shadow comes;
And heart must know, if it know thy light,
Thy wild hound Fear, the shadow of love's delight.
Yea, is it thus? Are we so made
Of death and darkness, that even thou,
O golden God of the joys of love,
Thy mind to us canst only prove,
The glorious devices of thy mind,
By so revealing how thy journeying here
Through this mortality, doth closely bind

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Thy brightness to the shadow of dreadful Fear?—
Ah no, it shall not be! Thy joyous light
Shall hide me from the hunger of fear to-night.

IV

For wonderfully to live I now begin:
So that the darkness which accompanies
Our being here, is fasten'd up within
The power of light that holdeth me;
And from these shining chains, to see
My joy with bold misliking eyes,
The shrouded figure will not dare arise.
For henceforth, from to-night,
I am wholly gone into the bright
Safety of the beauty of love:
Not only all my waking vigours plied
Under the searching glory of love,
But knowing myself with love all satisfied
Even when my life is hidden in sleep;
As high clouds, to themselves that keep
The moon's white company, are all possest
Silverly with the presence of their guest;
Or as a darken'd room
That hath within it roses, whence the air
And quietness are taken everywhere
Deliciously by sweet perfume.

Lascelles Abercrombie

THE BOOK OF

55

The Affinity

I HAVE to thank God I'm a woman,
For in these ordered days a woman only
Is free to be very hungry, very lonely.

It is sad for Feminism, but still clear
That man, more often than woman, is a pioneer.
If I would confide a new thought,
First to a man must it be brought.

Now, for our sins, it is my bitter fate
That such a man wills soon to be my mate,
And so of friendship is quick end:
When I have gained a love I lose a friend.

It is well within the order of things
That man should listen when his mate sings
But the true male never yet walked
Who liked to listen when his mate talked.

I would be married to a full man,
As would all women since the world began;
But from a wealth of living I have proved
I must be silent, if I would be loved.

Now of my silence I have much wealth,
I have to do my thinking all by stealth.
My thought may never see the day;
My mind is like a catacomb where early Christians
pray.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And of my silence I have much pain,
But of these pangs I have great gain;
For I must take to drugs or drink,
Or I must write the things I think.

If my sex would let me speak,
I would be very lazy and most weak;
I should speak only, and the things I spoke
Would fill the air a while, and clear like smoke.

The things I think now I write down
And some day I will show them to the town.
When I am sad I make thought clear;
I can re-read it all next year.

I have to thank God I'm a woman
For in these ordered days a woman only
Is free to be very hungry, very lonely.

Anna Wickham

56 *The Ballad of Camden Town*

I WALKED with Maisie long years back
The streets of Camden Town,
I splendid in my suit of black,
And she divine in brown.

Hers was a proud and noble face
A secret heart and eyes
Like water in a lonely place
Beneath unclouded skies.

THE BOOK OF

A bed, a chest, a faded mat,
And broken chairs a few,
Were all we had to grace our flat
In Hazel Avenue.

But I could walk to Hampstead Heath,
And crown her head with daisies,
And watch the streaming world beneath,
And men with other Maisies.

When I was ill and she was pale
And empty stood our store,
She left the latch key on its nail,
And saw me nevermore.

Perhaps she cast herself away
Lest both of us should drown:
Perhaps she feared to die, as they
Who die in Camden Town.

What 'came of her? The bitter nights
Destroy the rose and lily,
And souls are lost among the lights
Of painted Piccadilly.

What 'came of her? The river flows
So deep and wide and stilly,
And waits to catch the fallen rose
And clasp the broken lily.

I dream she dwells in London still
And breathes the evening air,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And often walk to Primrose Hill,
And hope to meet her there.

Once more together we will live,
For I will find her yet:
I have so little to forgive;
So much I can't forget.

James Elroy Flecker

57

Eve

EVE, with her basket, was
Deep in the bells and grass,
Wading in bells and grass
Up to her knees,
Picking a dish of sweet
Berries and plums to eat,
Down in the bells and grass
Under the trees.

Mute as a mouse in a
Corner the cobra lay,
Curled round a bough of the
Cinnamon tall . . .
Now to get even and
Humble proud heaven and
Now was the moment or
Never at all

"Eva!" Each syllable
Light as a flower fell,

THE BOOK OF

"Eva!" he whispered the
Wondering maid,
Soft as a bubble sung
Out of a linnet's lung,
Soft and most silverly
"Eva!" he said.

Picture that orchard sprite,
Eve, with her body white,
Supple and smooth to her
Slim finger tips,
Wondering, listening,
Listening, wondering,
Eve with a berry
Half-way to her lips.

Oh had our simple Eve
Seen through the make-believe!
Had she but known the
Pretender he was!
Out of the boughs he came,
Whispering still her name,
Tumbling in twenty rings
Into the grass.

Here was the strangest pair
In the world anywhere,
Eve in the bells and grass
Kneeling, and he
Telling his story low. . . .
Singing birds saw them go

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Down the dark path to
The Blasphemous Tree.

Oh what a clatter when
Titmouse and Jenny Wren
Saw him successful and
Taking his leave!
How the birds rated him,
How they all hated him!
How they all pitied
Poor motherless Eve!

Picture her crying
Outside in the lane,
Eve, with no dish of sweet
Berries and plums to eat,
Haunting the gate of the
Orchard in vain . . .
Picture the lewd delight
Under the hill to-night —
“Eva!” the toast goes round,
“Eva!” again.

Ralph Hodgson

58

Balkis

BALKIS was in her marble town,
And shadow over the world came down.
Whiteness of walls, towers and piers,
That all day dazzled eyes to tears,
Turned from being white-golden flame,

87

THE BOOK OF

And like the deep sea blue became.
Balkis into her garden went;
Her spirit was in discontent
Like a torch in restless air.
Joylessly she wandered there,
And saw her city's azure white
Lying under the great night,
Beautiful as the memory
Of a worshipping world would be
In the mind of a god, in the hour
When he must kill his outward power;
And, coming to a pool where trees
Grew in double greeneries,
Saw herself, as she went by
The water, walking beautifully,
And saw the stars shine in the glance
Of her eyes, and her own fair countenance
Passing, pale and wonderful,
Across the night that filled the pool.
And cruel was the grief that played
With the queen's spirit; and she said:
"What do I hear, reigning alone?
For to be unloved is to be alone.
There is no man in all my land
Dare my longing understand;
The whole folk like a peasant bows
Lest its look should meet my brows
And be harmed by this beauty of mine.
I burn their brains as I were sign
Of God's beautiful anger sent
To master them with punishment
Of beauty that must pour distress

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

On hearts grown dark with ugliness.
But it is I am the punisht one.
Is there no man, is there none,
In whom my beauty will but move
The lust of a delighted love;
In whom some spirit of God so thrives
That we may wed our lonely lives?
Is there no man, is there none?
She said, "I will go to Solomon."

Lascelles Abercrombie

59 *Lancelot and Guinevere*

SIR LANCELOT beside the mere
Rode at the golden close of day,
And the sad eyes of Guinevere
Went with him, with him, all the way.

The golden light to silver turned,
The mist came up out of the mere,
And steadily before him burned
The sombre gaze of Guinevere.

A dreadful chill about him crept,
The pleasant air to winter turned;
Like the wan eyes of one that wept;
Far through the mist the faint stars burned.

All that had sinned in days gone by
Like pale companions round him crept —

THE BOOK OF

All that beneath the morning sky
Had called the night to mind and wept.

But strangest showed his own offence
Of all the shadows creeping by;
The star of his magnificence
Fell from its station in the sky.

The lean wind robbed him of his pride;
Keen grew the sting of his offence;
And like a lamp within him died
The flame of his magnificence.

The drifting phantoms of the mere
Were death to pleasure and to pride;
The joy he had of Guinevere
Faded into the dark and died.

Oh loss of hope with loss of day
In mist and shadow of the mere! —
Where with him, with him, all the way,
Went the sad eyes of Guinevere.

Gerald Gould

60

A Ballad of Doom

“**L**ADIES, pretty ladies,
What do you lack?
Ladies, pretty ladies,
Choose from my pack.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

All the way to Heaven and all the way to Hell
I went to fetch the fairings I have to sell."

"If you've been to Heaven, if you've been to Hell,
I will pay a pretty price for a thing that you can tell —
How does my true love and how fares the foe
Who slew him on a winter's night, very long ago? "

"I went the road to Heaven — it is a weary way —
I passed the open gate of Hell — you may reach it in
a day
Of all the many folk I saw, how should I know
Which was your true love and which was your foe? "

"My love he is a gallant, blue-eyed and debonair "—
"A thousand thousand such as he you may meet with
anywhere "—
"He bears upon his breast the marks of wounds and
kisses seven."
"I saw not any man like this in all the courts of
Heaven."

"My foe he is a dour man and his hand is bitten
through —
A little sign of love I gave for the deed he dared to
do "—
"Lady, pretty lady, 'tis other news you lack."
"This fairing only, pedlar, will I have from out your
pack."

THE BOOK OF

" O lady, there in Heaven I saw the blessed stand
A-praising God, and one there was who had a bitten
hand;
And one among the damned I saw, who knew not any
rest,
Marks of wounds and kisses seven were burning on his
breast."

" Go, go again, good pedlar, and bring me word again
Why he I hate is doomed to bliss and he I love to pain.
Go, cry my name in Heaven, in Hell my name declare,
That I may know before I go what was answered
there."

" Lady, pretty lady,
What do you lack?
Lady, pretty lady,
Choose from my pack.
I've been again to Heaven, I've been again to Hell,
Here are news that you may choose from those I have
to sell."

" O what said my lover and what said my foe?
Tell me, trusty pedlar, that I may know.
I'll take the road to Heaven or go my way to Hell,
Give me news that I may choose and I will pay you
well."

" I cried your name before the damned, and he who
was your friend—
' A curse upon the silly fool who brought me to my
end: '

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

I cried your name before the saints, and he who was
your foe
Caught me with his bitten hand and would not let me
go.

"He held me long in my despite, conjuring me by God
And hope of Heaven, to come again back by the path I
trod
And swear your false-fair lover had been for ever true,
And he your foe was damned in Hell for the deed he
willed to do!"

"I'll climb the road to Heaven and kiss the wounded
hand
Of him who is a lover true, and he will understand.
Then will I take my way to Hell, unto my lover-foe —
False or true I love him, and God will let me go."

"Ladies, pretty ladies,
What do you lack?
Ladies, pretty ladies,
Choose from my pack.
All the way to Heaven and all the way to Hell
I went to fetch these pretty fairings I have to sell."
Elizabeth Rendall

61

Dust

WHEN the white flame in us is gone,
And we that lost the world's delight
Stiffen in darkness, left alone
To crumble in our separate night;

THE BOOK OF

When your swift hair is quiet in death,
And through the lips corruption thrust
Has stilled the labor of my breath —
When we are dust, when we are dust !

Not dead, not undesirous yet,
Still sentient, still unsatisfied,
We'll ride the air, and shine, and flit,
Around the places where we died,

And dance as dust before the sun,
And light of foot, and unconfined,
Hurry from road to road, and run
About the errands of the wind.

And every mote, on earth or air,
Will speed and gleam, down later days,
And like a secret pilgrim fare
By eager and invisible ways,

Nor ever rest, nor ever lie,
Till, beyond thinking, out of view,
One mote of all the dust that's I
Shall meet one atom that was you.

Then in some garden hushed from wind,
Warm in a sunset's afterglow,
The lovers in the flowers will find
A sweet and strange unquiet grow

Upon the peace ; and, past desiring
So high a beauty in the air,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And such a light, and such a quiring,
And such a radiant ecstasy there,

They'll know not if it's fire, or dew,
Or out of earth, or in the height,
Singing, or flame, or scent, or hue,
Or two that pass, in light, to light,

Out of the garden higher, higher . . .
But in that instant they shall learn
The shattering ecstasy of our fire.
And the weak passionless hearts will burn

And faint in that amazing glow,
Until the darkness close above;
And they will know — poor fools, they'll know! —
One moment, what it is to love.

Rupert Brooke

62

To a Greek Marble

WHITE grave goddess,
Pity my sadness,
O silence of Paros.

I am not of these about thy feet,
These garments and decorum;
I am thy brother,
The lover of aforetime crying to thee,
And thou hearest me not.

THE BOOK OF

I have whispered thee in thy solitudes
Of our loves in Phrygia,
The far ecstasy of burning noons
When the fragile pipes
Ceased in the cypress shade,
And the brown fingers of the shepherd
Moved over slim shoulders;
And only the cicada sang.

I have told thee of the hills
And the lisp of reeds
And the sun upon thy breasts,

And thou hearest me not,
Thou hearest me not.

Richard Aldington

WHAT shall we do for Love these days?
How shall we make an altar-blaze
To smite the horny eyes of men
With the renown of our Heaven,
And to the unbelievers prove
Our service to our dear god, Love?
What torches shall we lift above
The crowd that pushes through the mire,
To amaze the dark heads with strange fire?
I should think I were much to blame,
If never I held some fragrant flame
Above the noises of the world,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And openly 'mid men's hurrying stares,
Worshipt before the sacred fires
That are like flashing curtains furl'd
Across the presence of our lord Love.
Nay, would that I could fill the gaze
Of the whole earth with some great praise
Made in a marvel for men's eyes,
Some tower of glittering masonries,
Therein such a spirit flourishing
Men should see what my heart can sing:
All that Love hath done to me
Built into stone, a visible glee;
Marble carried to gleaming height
As moved aloft by inward delight;
Not as with toil of chisels hewn,
But seeming poised in a mighty tune.
For of all those who have been known
To lodge with our kind host, the sun,
I envy one for just one thing:
In Cordova of the Moors
There dwelt a passion-minded King,
Who set great bands of marble-hewers
To fashion his heart's thanksgiving
In a tall palace, shapen so
All the wondering world might know
The joy he had of his Moorish lass.
His love, that brighter and larger was
Than the starry places, into firm stone
He sent, as if the stone were glass
Fired and into beauty blown.

Solemn and invented gravely
In its bulk the fabric stood,

THE BOOK OF

Even as Love, that trusteth bravely
In its own exceeding good
To be better than the waste
Of time's devices; grandly spaced
Seriously the fabric stood.
But over it all a pleasure went
Of carven delicate ornament,
Wreathing up like ravishment,
Mentioning in sculptures twined
The blitheness Love hath in his mind;
And like delighted senses were
The windows, and the columns there
Made the following sight to ache
As the heart that did them make,
Well I can see that shining song
Flowering there, the upward throng
Of porches, pillars and windowed walls,
Spires like piercing panpipe calls,
Up to the roof's snow-cloud flight;
All glancing in the Spanish light
White as water of arctic tides,
Save an amber dazzle on sunny sides.
You had said, the radiant sheen
Of that palace might have been
A young god's fantasy, ere he came
His serious worlds and suns to frame;
Such an immortal passion
Quiver'd among the slim hewn stone.
And in the nights it seemed a jar
Cut in the substance of a star,
Wherein a wine, that will be poured
Some time for feasting Heaven, was stored.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

But within this fretted shell,
The wonder of Love made visible,
The King a private gentle mood
There placed, of pleasant quietude.
For right amidst there was a court,
Where always muskèd silences
Listened to water and to trees;
And herbage of all fragrant sort,—
Lavender, lad's-love, rosemary,
Basil, tansy, centaury,—
Was the grass of that orchard, hid
Love's amazements all amid.
Jarring the air with rumour cool,
Small fountains played into a pool
With sound as soft as the barley's hiss
When its beard just sprouting is;
Whence a young stream, that trod on moss
Prettily rimpled the court across.
And in the pool's clear idleness,
Moving like dreams through happiness,
Shoals of small bright fishes were;
In and out weed-thickets bent
Perch and carp, and sauntering went
With mouching jaws and eyes a-stare;
Or on a lotus leaf would crawl,
A brinded loach to bask and sprawl,
Tasting the warm sun ere it dipt
Into the water; but quick as fear
Back his shining brown head slipt
To crouch on the gravel of his lair,
Where the cooled sunbeams broke in wrack,
Split shatter'd gold about his back.

THE BOOK OF

So within that green-veiled air,
Within that white-walled quiet, where
Innocent water thought aloud,—
Childish prattle that must make
The wise sunlight with laughter shake
On the leafage overbowed,—
Often the King and his love-lass
Let the delicious hours pass.
All the outer world could see
Graved and sawn amazingly
Their love's delighted riotise,
Fixt in marble for all men's eyes;
But only these twain could abide
In the cool peace that withinside
Thrilling desire and passion dwelt;
They only knew the still meaning spelt
By Love's flaming script, which is
God's word written in ecstasies,

And where is now the palace gone,
All the magical skill'd stone,
All the dreaming towers wrought
By Love as if no more than thought
The unresisting marble was?
How could such a wonder pass?
Ah, it was but built in vain
Against the stupid horns of Rome,
That pusht down into the common loam
The loveliness that shone in Spain.
But we have raised it up again!
A loftier palace, fairer far,
Is ours, and one that fears no war.
Safe in marvellous walls we are;

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Wondering sense like builded fires,
High amazement of desires,
Delight and certainty of love,
Closing around, roofing above
Our unapproacht and perfect hour
Within the splendours of love's power.

Lascelles Abercrombie

64 *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*

At the Gate of the Sun, Bagdad, in olden time.

THE MERCHANTS (*together*)

AWAY, for we are ready to a man!
Our camels sniff the evening and are glad.
Lead on, O master of the Caravan:
Lead on the Merchant-Princes of Bagdad.

THE CHIEF DRAPER

Have we not Indian carpets dark as wine,
Turbans and sashes, gowns and bows and veils,
And broideries of intricate design,
And printed hangings in enormous bales?

THE CHIEF GROCER

We have rose-candy, we have spikenard,
Mastic and terebinth and oil and spice,
And such sweet jams meticulously jarred
As God's own Prophet eats in Paradise.

THE BOOK OF

THE PRINCIPAL JEWS

And we have manuscripts in peacock styles
By Ali of Damascus; we have swords
Engraved with storks and apes and crocodiles,
And heavy beaten necklaces, for Lords.

THE MASTER OF THE CARAVAN

But you are nothing but a lot of Jews.

THE PRINCIPAL JEWS

Sir, even dogs have daylight, and we pay.

THE MASTER OF THE CARAVAN

But who are ye in rags and rotten shoes,
You dirty-bearded, blocking up the way?

THE PILGRIMS

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further: it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea,

White on a throne or guarded in a cave
There lives a prophet who can understand
Why men were born but surely we are brave,
Who make the golden journey to Samarkand.

THE CHIEF MERCHANT

We gnaw the nail of hurry. Master, away!

ONE OF THE WOMEN

O turn your eyes to where your children stand.
Is not Bagdad the beautiful? O stay!

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

THE MERCHANTS (*in chorus*)

We take the Golden Road to Samarkand.

AN OLD MAN

Have you not girls and garlands in your homes,
Eunuchs and Syrian boys at your command?
Seek not excess: God hateth him who roams!

THE MERCHANTS (*in chorus*)

We make the golden journey to Samarkand.

A PILGRIM WITH A BEAUTIFUL VOICE

Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells
When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
And softly through the silence beat the bells
Along the golden road to Samarkand.

A MERCHANT

We travel not for trafficking alone:
By hotter winds our fiery hearts are fanned:
For lust of knowing what should not be known
We make the golden journey to Samarkand.

THE MASTER OF THE CARAVAN

Open the gate, O watchman of the night!

THE WATCHMAN

Ho, travellers, I open. For what land
Leave you the dim-moon city of delight?

THE MERCHANTS (*with a shout*)

We make the golden journey to Samarkand.
(*The Caravan passes through the gate.*)

THE BOOK OF

THE WATCHMAN (*consoling the women*)

What would ye, ladies? It was ever thus.

Men are unwise and curiously planned.

A WOMAN

They have their dreams, and do not think of us.

VOICES OF THE CARAVAN (*in the distance, singing*)

We make the golden journey to Samarkand.

James Elroy Flecker

65

Arabia

FAR are the shades of Arabia,
Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
Under the ghost of the moon;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies.

Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear murk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked, dark-haired musicians
In the brooding silence of night.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

They haunt me — her lutes and her forests;
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dream recalls
Her loveliness to me:
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say —
'He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
They have stolen his wits away.'

Walter de la Mare

66

Babylon

IF you could bring her glories back!
You gentle sirs who sift the dust
And burrow in the mould and must
Of Babylon for bric-a-brac;
Who catalogue and pigeon-hole
The faded splendours of her soul
And put her greatness under glass —
If you could bring her past to pass!

If you could bring her dead to life!
The soldier lad; the market wife;
Madam buying fowls from her;
Tip, the butcher's bandy cur;
Workmen carting bricks and clay;
Babel passing to and fro
On the business of a day
Gone three thousand years ago —
That you cannot; then be done,
Put the goblet down again,

THE BOOK OF

Let the broken arch remain,
Leave the dead men's dust alone —

Is it nothing how she lies,
This old mother of you all,
You great cities proud and tall
Towering to a hundred skies
Round a world she never knew,
Is it nothing, this, to you?
Must the ghoulish work go on
Till her very floors are gone?
While there's still a brick to save
Drive these people from her grave!

The Jewish seer when he cried
Woe to Babel's lust and pride
Saw the foxes at her gates;
Once again the wild thing waits.
Then leave her in her last decay
A house of owls, a foxes' den;
The desert that till yesterday
Hid her from the eyes of men
In its proper time and way
Will take her to itself again.

Ralph Hodgson

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

67

Babylon

I'M going softly all my years in wisdom if in pain —
For, oh, the music stirs my blood as once it did
before
And still I hear in Babylon, in Babylon, in Babylon,
The dancing feet in Babylon, of those who took my
floor.

I'm going silent all my years, but garnered in my brain
Is that swift wit which used to flash and cut them
like a sword
And now I hear in Babylon, in Babylon, in Babylon,
The foolish tongues in Babylon, of those who took
my word.

I'm going lonely all my days, who was the first to crave
The second, fierce, unsteady voice, that struggled
to speak free —
And now I watch in Babylon, in Babylon, in Babylon,
The pallid loves in Babylon of men who once loved
me.

I'm sleeping early by a flame as one content and gray,
But, oh, I dream a dream of dreams beneath a winter
moon,
I breathe the breath of Babylon, of Babylon, of Baby-
lon,
The scent of silks in Babylon that floated to a tune.

THE BOOK OF

A band of years has flogged me out — an exile's fate
is mine,

To sit with mumbling crones and still a heart that
cries with youth.

But, oh, to walk in Babylon, in Babylon, in Babylon,
The happy streets in Babylon, when once the dream
was truth.

Viola Taylor

68

The Bough of Nonsense

AN IDYLL

BACK from the Somme two Fusiliers
Limped painfully home; the elder said,

S. "Robert, I've lived three thousand years
This Summer, and I'm nine parts dead."

R. "But if that's truly so," I cried, "quick, now,
Through these great oaks and see the famous bough

"Where once a nonsense built her nest
With skulls and flowers and all things queer,
In an old boot, with patient breast
Hatching three eggs; and the next year. . . ."

S. "Foaled thirteen squamous young beneath, and rid
Wales of drink, melancholy, and psalms, she did."

Said he, "Before this quaint mood fails,
We'll sit and weave a nonsense hymn,"

R. "Hanging it up with monkey tails
In a deep grove all hushed and dim . . ."

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

S. "To glorious yellow-bunched banana-trees,"

R. "Planted in dreams by pious Portuguese,"

S. "Which men are wise beyond their time,
And worship nonsense, no one more."

R. "Hard by, among old quince and lime,
They've built a temple with no floor,"

S. "And whosoever worships in that place,
He disappears from sight and leaves no trace."

R. "Once the Galatians built a fane
To Sense: what duller God than that?"

S. "But the first day of autumn rain
The roof fell in and crushed them flat."

R. Ay, for a roof of subtlest logic falls
When nonsense is foundation for the walls."

I tell him old Galatian tales;
He caps them in quick Portuguese,
While phantom creatures with green scales
Scramble and roll among the trees.
The hymn swells; on a bough above us sings
A row of bright pink birds, flapping their wings.

Robert Graves

HEAVEN bless grocers' shops wherein
Raisins are with tawny skin,
Murrey wine, and green liqueurs,
Curious spice in canisters,

THE BOOK OF

Honest ham, and mother tea,
Isinglass and carroway,
Rennet, vinegar, and salt
That honour has, and clear cobalt:
Coffee, that swart Mussulman,
Caviar the Caspian,
Suave oil, angry condiments,
Anchovies, and sweet essence
Of clove and almond, honeycomb,
Jam our English orchards from,
Portly cheeses full of mould,
Sugars and treacles brown or gold;
Soap, to keep us pure, and white
Candles, the slim sons of light,
Butter like the flow'r of gorse,
Wheat meal fine and oat meal coarse,
Soda for our maid's service,
Sago, tapioca, rice
An economic trinity,
Bacon, friend ham's affinity.
Bananas, which the People please,
Proletarian oranges.
While of fruits in syrup a
Frequent cornucopia.
Eggs fresh within and white without,
Cocoa of origin devout,
Nuts and string and brooms and mops,
Saveloys and lollipops —
God, be good to grocers' shops!

Sherard Vines

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

70 "*Psittachus Eois Imitatrix ales ab
Indis.*"—*Ovid*

THE parrot's voice snaps out —
No good to contradict —
What he says he'll say again:
Dry facts, like biscuits.

His voice and vivid colours
Of his breast and wings
Are immemorably old;
Old dowagers dressed in crimped satin
Boxed in their rooms
Like specimens beneath a glass
Inviolate — and never changing,
Their memory of emotions dead;
The ardour of their summers
Sprayed like camphor
On their silken parasols
Intissued in a cupboard.

"*Psittachus eois imitatrix ales ab indis.*"

Reflective, but with never a new thought
The parrot sways upon his ivory perch —
Then gravely turns a somersault
Through rings nailed in the roof —
Much as the sun performs his antics
As he climbs the aerial bridge

THE BOOK OF

We only see
Through crystal prisms in a falling rain.
Sacheverell Sitwell

71

Fables

WHO taught the centaur first to drink
Ladling his huge hands from the brink -
When other monsters lie and lap
The waters like a fruitful pap?

The same who by ingenious ways
Taught the chameleon his rays
To take from leaves of tow'ring trees
Strung thick with dew-bells that the bees
Set ringing, till they bring the honey,
Thrilled with music, gold with money
Back to their castles in the clouds —
And the chameleon, his crowds
Of foes to fight with, has two eyes
That travel sideways, no surprise
On any side. He swiftly sees
All — flowers, slow floating birds and bees.

The gentle, loving unicorn
Will never eat the grass —
All bushes have too many thorns
Their leaves are made of brass,
His horn is given him to take
The soft fruit from the trees,
“ Please grasp my horn and roughly shake,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

O nymph, among those leaves;
This pear transfixed upon my horn;
I cannot reach"—beyond the brim;
Clutched at; she misses; it has gone—
"Alas! You've got it! I can't swim."

To comb a satyr's silken beard
Arabian travellers aspire,
They beg, they bribe; more loved than feared
The satyr trots to take his hire—
Fawning, he takes from outstretched hand
Such fruit his eyes have sometimes seen
On swaying branches where the land
Sighs in a soft wind and the green
Leaves shake beneath the nightingale.
Thus cajoled, they can reach his beard
Where gums lie, gathered from the frail
Flowers he feeds on, where no voice is heard.

Sacheverell Sitwell

72

Check

THE night was creeping on the ground;
She crept and did not make a sound
Until she reached the tree, and then
She covered it, and stole again
Along the grass beside the wall.

I heard the rustle of her shawl
As she threw blackness everywhere
Upon the sky and ground and air,

THE BOOK OF

And in the room where I was hid:
But no matter what she did
To everything that was without,
She could not put my candle out.

So I stared at the night, and she
Stared back solemnly at me.

James Stephens

73 · *Myself on the Merry-Go-Round*

To Robert Nichols

THE giddy sun's kaleidoscope —
The pivot of a switchback world
Is tied to it by many a rope:
The people (flaunting streamers), furred
Metallic banners of the seas,
The giddy sun's kaleidoscope
Casts colours on the face of these:
Cosmetics of Eternity,
And powders faces blue as death;
Beneath the parasols we see
Gilt faces tarnished by sea-breath,
And crawling like the foam, each horse
Beside the silken tents of sea
In whirlpool circles takes his course.
Huge houses, humped like camels, chase
The wooden horses' ceaseless bound;
The throbbing whirring sun that drags
The streets upon its noisy round
With tramways chasing them in vain,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Projects in coloured cubes each face —
Then shatters them upon our brain.
The house-fronts hurl them back, they jar
Upon cross-currents of the noise:
Like atoms of my soul they are,
They shake my body's equipoise,—
A clothes line for the Muse to fly
(So thin and jarred and angular)
Her rags of tattered finery.
Beneath the heat of trees' sharp hue —
A ceaseless whirr, metallic-green,
Sounds like a gimlet shrilling through
The mind, to reach the dazzling sheen
Of meanings life can not decide:
Then words set all awry, and you
Are left upon the other side.
Our senses, each a wooden horse,
We paint till they appear to us
Like life, and then queer strangers course
In our place on each Pegasus.
The very heat seems but to be
The product of some man-made force —
Steam from the band's machinery.
The heat is in a thousand rags
Reverberant with sound, whose dry
Frayed ends we never catch, seem tags
Of our unfinished entity;
And like a stretched accordion
The houses throb with heat, and flags
Of smoke are tunes light plays upon.
The band's kaleidoscopic whirr
Tears up those jarring threads of heat

THE BOOK OF

The crowds; plush mantles seem to purr —
Crustacean silk gowns take the beat
From houses; each reverberates
With this vitality and stir;
The giddy heat acerberates.
And in the swirling restaurant
Where liqueurs at perpetual feud
Dispute for sequinel lights and taunt
Hot leaves, our dusty souls exude
Their sentiments, while scraps of sense
Float inward from the band and flaunt —
Disturb the general somnolence.

Edith Sitwell

74

Philosophy

“**L**AST night in the Baltic Tavern tap
I met,” Mike said, “a longshore chap
Who said, ‘Don’t sailarin’ look queer
With all them mines an’ suchlike gear?
If I was you,’ ‘e says, says ‘e,
‘I’d take a shore job same as me,
An’ leave this trouble that’s around
For them that’s fond o’ gettin’ drowned.’

“‘No, no,’ I says, ‘I ain’t a-givin’
It up for any square’ead livin’,
The ways I put it in my ‘ead
Is — no man’s done until ‘e’s dead,
An’ if it comes to dyin’, sure,
A man dies once, an’ then no more.’

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

"I says, 'When ships 'as left off goin',
An' grass on London docks is growin',
(The same's it is, so I've 'eard say,
On all them 'Amburg wharves this day),
When Lloyd's is broke an' on their uppers,
An' all the owners in the scuppers,
Why, then,' I says, 'I might be lookin'
For a job o' cartin' coals or cookin',

Or washin' pots, or sellin' tapes,
Or leadin' bears, or learnin' apes,
But since, as I 'ear tell, so far
There's ships still passin' Mersey Bar,
An' one or two comes in each day
To London Docks, so I've 'eard say,
An' ships can't sail without no crew,—
So long as they sail, I sail too.

"'If you, young man, 'ad follered the sea
Your 'ole life long, the same as me,
'Ad knowed it wakin' an' asleep,
An' seen God's wonders in the deep,
I guess you'd not be rattled much
By mines or submarines or such,
Or care a bloomin' finger snap
For no fool Kaiser or such chap . . .

"'Besides,' I says, 'when all is said,
Just think o' them poor chaps that's dead—
Poor pals o' mine as 'ad to die—
They took their chances . . . so do I!'"

Cicely Fox Smith

THE BOOK OF

75

Billy's Yarn

"O seen her off?" . . .

"Me," says the tide,
"I 'ad to, for why, there was no one beside;
For sailor-folks' women, they're busy enough,
'Thout 'angin' round pier-'eds to see their chaps off.
The gulls all about 'er they wrangled an' cried,
An' I seen 'er off," says the Liverpool tide.

"Oo waved 'er good-bye?" . . .

"Me," says old Tuskar,
"When the sun it went down an' the light is got dusker,
(With a sea gettin' up an' the wind blowin' keen)
An' the smoke of 'er funnels could 'ardly be seen,
An' the last of the sunset was red in the sky . . .
With the first of my flashes I waved 'er good-bye."

"Oo seen 'er sink?" . . .

"Me," says the sun,
"At the top o' my climbin' I seen the thing done . . .
I seen 'er 'eave to, an' I seen 'er 'ull shiver,
Settle, an' stumble, an' tremble, an' quiver,
An' 'er stern it went up, an' 'er bow it went down,
An' the most of 'er people they just 'ad to drown,
An' I'd never a cloud for to shut out the sight,
So I seen 'er sink," says the sun in 'is might.

"Oo seen the last of 'er?" . . .

"Us," says the crew,
All that was left out o' twenty-and-two,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

"We seen the last of 'er — floatin' round
On a bottom-up boat among dead uns and drowned —
We seen 'er waterways runnin' with blood —
We seen poor mates of ours shot where they stood —
But them chaps as done it, I tell you now true,
They ain't seen the last of us yet," says the crew,
"No, you bet your sweet life," says what's left o'
the crew.

Cicely Fox Smith

76

"Ships That Pass"

An Episode of the Cruiser Patrol

THERE are ships that pass in the night-time, some
poet has told us how,
But a ship that passed in the day-time is the one I'm
thinking of now,
Where the seas roll green from the Arctic and the
wind comes keen from the Pole,
'Tween Rockall Bank and the Shetlands, up North
on the long patrol

We sighted her one day early; the forenoon watch
was begun,
There was mist like wool on the water, and a glimpse
of a pale cold sun,
And she came through the dim grey weather — a thing
of wonder and gleam,
From the port o' the Past on a bowline, close-hauled
on a wind of dream.

THE BOOK OF

The rust of years was upon her — she was weathered
by many a gale —

The flag of a Dago republic went up to her peak at
our hail;

But I knew her — Lord God! I knew her, as how
could I help but know

The ship that I served my time in, no matter how
long ago!

I'd have climbed to her royals blindfold, I'd have
known her spars in a crowd;

Aloft and alow, I knew her, brace and halliard and
shroud —

From the scroll-work under her stern-ports to the
paint on her figure-head —

And the shout, "All hands," on her main deck would
have tumbled me up from the dead.

She moved like a queen on the water, with the grace
that was hers of yore,

The sun on her shining canvas — what had she to do
with war,

With a world that is full of trouble and seas that are
stained with crime?

She came like a dream remembered, dreamt once in
a happier time.

She was youth, and its sorrow that passes — the light,
the laughter, the joy,

The South, and the small white cities, and the care-
free heart of a boy,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The farewell flash of the Fastnet to light you the
whole world round,
And the hoot of the tug at parting — and the song
of the homeward bound.

The sun, and the flying-fish weather — night, and a
fiddle's tune —
And palms, and the warm maize-yellow of a low West
Indian moon —
Storm in the high South latitudes — and the boom of
a Trade-filled sail —
And the anchor watch in the tropics, and the old Sou'
Spanner's tale.

Was it the lap of the wave I heard or the chill wind's
cry,
Or a snatch of a deep-sea chantey I knew in the
years gone by?
Was it the whine of the gear in the sheaves, or the
sea-gulls' call,
Or the ghost of my shipmates' voices, tallying on to
the fall?"

I went through her papers duly — and no one, I hope
could see
A freight of the years departed was the cargo she
bore for me!
I talked with her Dago captain while we searched
her for contraband,
And . . . I longed for one grip of her wheel-spokes
like a grip of a friend's right hand.

THE BOOK OF

And I watched while her helm went over, and the sails
were sheeted home,
And under her moving forefoot the bubbles broke
into foam,
Till she faded from sight in the greyness — a thing
of wonder and gleam,
For the port of the Past on a bowline — closehauled
on a wind of dream!

Cicely Fox Smith

77

"In Prize"

A SHIP was built in Glasgow, and oh, she looked
a daisy —

(Just the way that some ships do!)

An' the only thing against 'er was she allus steered
so crazy

(An' it's true, my Johnnie Bowline, true!)

They sent 'er out in ballast to Oregon for lumber,
An' before she dropped her pilot she all but lost 'er
number.

They sold 'er into Norway because she steered so
funny,

An' she nearly went to glory before they drawed the
money.

They sold 'er out o' Norway — they sold 'er into Chile,
An' Chile got a bargain because she steered so silly.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

They chartered 'er to Germans' with a bunch o' greasers
forrard;
Old shellbacks wouldn't touch 'er because she steered
so 'orrid.

She set a course for Bremen' with contraband inside
'er,
An' she might 'ave got there sometime if a cruiser
'adn't spied 'er.'

She nearly drowned the boarders because she cut such
capers,
But they found she was a German' through inspectin'
of her papers.

So they put a crew on board 'er, which was both
right and lawful,
An' the prize crew 'ad a picnic because she steered
so awful.

But they brought 'er into Kirkwall, an' then they said,
"Lord lumme
If I ever see an 'ooker as steered so kind o' rummy!"

But she'll fetch her price at auction, for oh, she looks
a daisy.

(Just the way that some ships do!)
An' the chap as tops the biddin' won't know she steers
so crazy
(But it's true, my Johnnie Bowline, true!)

Cicely Fox Smith

THE BOOK OF

78 *The Little Waves of Breffny*

THE grand road from the mountain goes shining
to the sea,

And there is traffic in it, and many a horse and cart;
But the little roads of Cloonagh are dearer far to me,
And the little roads of Cloonagh go rambling through
my heart.

A great storm from the ocean goes shouting o'er the
hill,

And there is glory in it, and terror on the wind;
But the haunted air of twilight is very strange and still,
And the little winds of twilight are dearer to my
mind.

The great waves of the Atlantic sweep storming on
their way,

Shining green and silver with the hidden herring
shoal;
But the little waves of Breffny have drenched my
heart in spray,
And the little waves of Breffny go stumbling through
my soul.

Eva Gore-Booth

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

79

Cargoes

QUINQUIREME of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays,

John Maschfeld

80

Deep Water Jack

OH, it's "ah, fare you well," for the deep sea's
crying,
You thought you could forget it, but it's no use trying,
Trying to forget it when it calls you so! . . .
Hey, Deep Water Johnnie, kiss your girl and go!

THE BOOK OF

Here's warmth, and soft living, and an easy bed!
It's toil, and much peril, that you're going to instead.
Hard life, and bitter faring, and a poor man's fee
Are all of a man's portion that follows the sea.

But it's "ah, fare you well," the deep sea's calling
Back to cold and hunger and heaving and hauling,
To decks awash and frozen yards, as very well you
know:

But ah, Deep Water Johnnie, kiss your girl and go!

How can a man help it, when the God that made him
Set his feet to follow where the four winds bade him?
How should a man help it, when his heart goes jiggling
To the sea's song and the sail's song and wind through
the rigging?

And it's "ah, fare you well," for the deep sea's crying!
You thought you could forget it, but it's no use trying,
Trying to forget it when it calls you so! . . .
Hey, Deep Water Johnnie, kiss your girl and go!

Cicely Fox Smith

81

Uxbridge Road

THE Western Road goes streaming out to seek
the cleanly wild,
It pours the city's dim desires towards the undefiled,
It sweeps betwixt the huddled homes about its eddies
grown

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

To smear the little space between the city and the
sown:

The torments of that seething tide who is there that
can see?

There's one who walked with starry feet the western
road by me!

He is the Drover of the soul; he leads the flock of men
All wistful on that weary track, and brings them back
again.

The dreaming few, the slaving crew, the motley caste
of life —

The wastrel and artificer, the harlot and the wife —
They may not rest, for ever pressed by one they can-
not see:

The one who walked with starry feet the western road
by me.

He drives them east, he drives them west, between
the dark and light;

He pastures them in city pens, he leads them home
at night.

The towery trams, the threaded trains, like shuttles to
and fro

To weave the web of working days in ceaseless travel
go.

How harsh the warp, how long the weft! who shall
the fabric see?

The one who walked with starry feet the western road
by me!

THE BOOK OF

Throughout the living joyful year at lifeless tasks to
strive,

And scarcely at the end to save gentility alive;

The villa plot to sow and reap, to act the villa lie,
Beset by villa fears to live, midst villa dreams to die;
Ah, who can know the dreary woe? and who the
splendour see?

The one who walked with starry feet the western road
by me.

Behold! he lent me as we went the vision of the seer;
Behold! I saw the life of men, the life of God shine
clear.

I saw the hidden Spirit's thrust; I saw the race fulfil
The spiral of its steep ascent, predestined of the Will.
Yet not unled, but shepherded by one they may not
see —

The one who walked with starry feet the western road
by me!

Evelyn Underhill

82

Sorley's Weather

WHEN outside the icy rain
Comes leaping helter-skelter,
Shall I tie my restive brain
Snugly under shelter?

Shall I make a gentle song
Here in my firelit study,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

When outside the winds blow strong
And the lanes are muddy?

With old wine and drowsy meats
Am I to fill my belly?
Shall I glutton here with Keats?
Shall I drink with Shelley?

Tobacco's pleasant, firelight's good:
Poetry makes both better.
Clay is wet and so is mud,
Winter rains are wetter.

Yet rest there, Shelley, on the sill,
For though the winds come frorely,
I'm away to the rain-blown hill
And the ghost of Sorley.

Robert Graves

83.

A Drover

TO Meath of the pastures,
From wet hills by the sea,
Through Leitrim and Longford,
Go my cattle and me.

I hear in the darkness
Their slipping and breathing —
I name them the bye-ways
They're to pass without heeding;

THE BOOK OF

Then the wet, winding roads,
Brown bogs with black water;
And my thoughts on white ships
And the King o' Spain's daughter.

O! farmer, strong farmer!
You can spend at the fair;
But your face you must turn
To your crops and your care.

And soldiers — red soldiers!
You've seen many lands;
But you walk two by two,
And by captain's commands.

O! the smell of the beasts,
The wet wind in the morn;
And the proud and hard earth
Never broken for corn;

And the crowds at the fair,
The herds loosened and blind,
Loud words and dark faces
And the wild blood behind.

(O! strong men, with your best
I would strive breast to breast,
I could quiet your herds
With my words, with my words.)

I will bring you, my kine,
Where there's grass to the knee;

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

But you'll think of scant croppings
Harsh with salt of the sea.

Padraic Colum

84

Haymaking

AFTER night's thunder far away had rolled
The fiery day had a kernel sweet of cold,
And in the perfect blue the clouds uncurled,
Like the first gods before they made the world
And misery, swimming the stormless sea
In beauty and in divine gaiety.
The smooth white empty road was lightly strewn
With leaves—the holly's Autumn falls in June—
And fir cones standing stiff up in the heat.
The mill-foot water tumbled white and lit
With tossing crystals, happier than any crowd
Of children pouring out of school aloud.
And in the little thickets where a sleeper
For ever might lie lost, the nettle-creeper
And garden warbler sang unceasingly;
While over them shrill shrieked in his fierce glee
The swift with wings and tail as sharp and narrow
As if the bow had flown off with the arrow.
Only the scent of woodbine and hay new-mown
Travelled the road. In the field sloping down
Park-like, to where its willows showed the brook,
Haymakers rested. The tosser lay forsook
Out in the sun; and the long wagon stood
Without its team, it seemed it never would
Move from the shadow of that single yew.

THE BOOK OF

The team, as still, until their task was due,
Beside the labourers enjoyed the shade
That three squat oaks mid-field together made
Upon a circle of grass and weed uncut,
And on the hollow, once a chalk-pit, but
Now brimmed with nut and elder-flower so clean.
The men leaned on their rakes, about to begin,
But still. And all were silent. All was old,
This morning time, with a great age untold,
Older than Clare and Cobbett, Morland and Crome,
Than, at the field's far edge, the farmer's home,
A white house crouched at the foot of a great tree.
Under the heavens that know not what years be
The men, the beasts, the trees, the implements
Uttered even what they will in times far hence —
All of us gone out of the reach of change —
Immortal in a picture of an old grange.

Edward Thomas

85 *There are Songs Enough*

THERE are songs enough of love, of joy, of grief;
Roads to the sunset, alleys to the moon;
Poems of the red rose and the golden leaf,
Fantastic faery and gay ballad tune.

The long road unto nothing I will sing,
Sing on one note, monotonous and dry,
Of sameness, calmness and the years that bring
No more emotion than the fear to die.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Grey house, grey house and after that grey house,
Another house as grey and steep and still;
An old cat tired of playing with a mouse,
A sick child tired of chasing down the hill.

Shuffle and hurry, idle feet, and slow,
Grim face and merry face, so ugly all!
Why do you hurry? Where is there to go?
Why are you shouting? Who is there to call?

Lovers still kissing, feverish to drain
Stale juices from the shrivelled fruit of lust:
A black umbrella held up in the rain,
The raindrops making patterns in the dust.

If this distaste I hold for fools is such,
Shall I not spit upon myself as well?
Do I not eat and drink and smile as much?
Do I not fatten also in this hell?

Sadness and joy — if they were melted up,
Things that were great — upon the fires of time
Drop but as soup in the accustomed cup,
Settle in stagnance, trickle into grime.

Faith, freedom, art that fire a man or two
And set him like a pilgrim on his way
With Beauty's face before him — what of you,
Priest, Butcher, Scholar, King, upon that day?

The dullard-masses that no god can save!
If I were God, to rise and strike you down

THE BOOK OF

And break your churches in an angry wave
And make a furious bonfire of your town!

God in a coloured globe, alone and still,
Embroidering wonders with a fearless brain,
On loom of spaces measureless, to fill
The empty air with passion and with pain.

Emblazon all the heavens with desire
And Wisdom dived for in the depths of time —
Thoughts sculptured mountainous, and fancy's fire
Caught in the running swiftness of a rhyme.

Passion high-pedestalled, pangs turned to treasure,
Perfected and undone and built afresh
With concentrated agony and Pleasure . . .
If I were God, and not a weight of flesh!

Iris Tree

86 *Happy Is England Now*

THERE is not anything more wonderful
Than a great people moving towards the deep
Of an unguessed and unfear'd future; nor
Is aught so dear of all held dear before
As the new passion stirring in their veins
When the destroying Dragon wakes from sleep.

Happy is England now, as never yet!
And though the sorrows of the slow days fret
Her faithfulest children, grief itself is proud.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Ev'n the warm beauty of this spring and summer
That turns to bitterness turns then to gladness
Since for this England the beloved ones died.

Happy is England in the brave that die
For wrongs not hers and wrongs so sternly hers:
Happy in those that give, give, and endure
The pain that never the new years may cure:
Happy in all her dark woods, green fields, towns,
Her hills and rivers and her chafing sea.

What'er was dear before is dearer now.
There's not a bird singing upon his bough
But sings the sweeter in our English ears:
There's not a nobleness of heart, hand, brain
But shines the purer; happiest is England now
In those that fight, and watch with pride and tears.
John Freeman

87

August, 1914

HOW still this quiet cornfield is to-night!
By an intenser glow the evening falls,
Bringing, not darkness, but a deeper light;
Among the stooks a partridge covey calls.

The windows glitter on the distant hill;
Beyond the hedge the sheep-bells in the fold
Stumble on sudden music and are still;
The forlorn pinewoods droop above the wold.

THE BOOK OF

An endless quiet valley reaches out
Past the blue hills into the evening sky;
Over the stubble, cawing goes a rout
Of rooks from harvest, flagging as they fly.

So beautiful it is, I never saw
So great a beauty on these English fields,
Touched by the twilight's coming into awe,
Ripe to the soul and rich with summer's yields.

These homes, this valley spread below me here,
The rooks, the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen,
Have been the heartfelt things past-speaking dear
To unknown generations of dead men,

Who, century after century, held these farms,
And, looking out to watch the changing sky,
Heard, as we hear, the rumours and alarms
Of war at hand and danger pressing nigh.

And knew, as we know, that the message meant
The breaking off of ties, the loss of friends,
Death, like a miser getting in his rent,
And no new stones laid where the trackway ends.

The harvest not yet won, the empty bin,
The friendly horses taken from the stalls,
The fallow on the hill not yet brought in,
The cracks unplastered in the leaking walls.

Yet heard the news, and went discouraged home,
And brooded by the fire with heavy mind,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

With such dumb loving of the Berkshire loam
As breaks the dumb hearts of the English kind,

Then sadly rose and left the well-loved Downs,
And so by ship to sea, and knew no more
The fields of home, the byres, the market towns,
Nor the dear outline of the English shore.

But knew the misery of the soaking trench,
The freezing in the rigging, the despair
In the revolting second of the wrench
When the blind soul is flung upon the air,

And died (uncouthly, most) in foreign lands
For some idea but dimly understood
Of an English city never built by hands
Which love of England prompted and made good.

If there be any life beyond the grave,
It must be near the men and things we love,
Some power of quick suggestion how to save,
Touching the living soul as from above.

An influence from the Earth from those dead hearts
So passionate once, so deep, so truly kind,
That in the living child the spirit starts,
Feeling companioned still, not left behind.

Surely above these fields a spirit broods,
A sense of many watchers, muttering near,
Of the lone Downland with the forlorn woods
Loved to the death, inestimably dear.

THE BOOK OF

A muttering from beyond the veils of Death
From long-dead men, to whom this quiet scene
Came among blinding tears with the last breath,
The dying soldier's vision of his queen.

All the unspoken worship of those lives
Spent in forgotten wars at other calls
Glimmers upon these fields where evening drives
Beauty like breath, so gently darkness falls.

Darkness that makes the meadows holier still;
The elm-trees sadden in the hedge, a sigh
Moves in the beech-clump on the haunted hill,
The rising planets deepen in the sky,

And silence broods like spirit on the brae;
A glimmering moon begins, the moonlight runs
Over the grasses of the ancient way
Rutted this morning by the passing guns.

John Masefield

88

1914

I

PEACE

NOW, God be thanked who has matched us with
His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
Leave the sick hearts that honor could not move,
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
And all the little emptiness of love!
Oh! we, who have known shame, we have found release there,
Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;
Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there
But only agony, and that has ending;
And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

II

SAFETY

Dear! of all happy in the hour, most blest
He who has found our hid security,
Assured in the dark tides of the world that rest,
And heard our word, "Who is so safe as we?"
We have found safety with all things undying,
The winds, and morning, tears of men and mirth,
The deep night, and birds singing, and clouds flying,
And sleep, and freedom, and the autumnal earth.
We have built a house that is not for Time's throwing.
We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for ever.
War knows no power. Safe shall be my going.
Secretly armed against all death's endeavor;
Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall;
And if these poor limbs die, safest of all.

THE BOOK OF

III

THE DEAD

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich-Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhopèd serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.
Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
Honor has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

IV

THE DEAD

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth.
The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,
And sunset, and the colors of the earth.
These had seen movement, and heard music; known
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friendèd;
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is
ended.
There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
In wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

V

THE SOLDIER

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Rupert Brooke

TO these I turn, in these I trust;
Brother Lead and Sister Steel.
To his blind power I make appeal;
I guard her beauty clean from rust.

THE BOOK OF

He spins and burns and loves the air,
And splits a skull to win my praise;
But up the nobly marching days
She glitters naked, cold and fair.

Sweet Sister, grant your soldier this;
That in good fury he may feel
The body where he sets his heel
Quail from your downward darting kiss.

Siegfried Sassoon

90

The Spires of Oxford

(AS SEEN FROM THE TRAIN)

I SAW the spires of Oxford
As I was passing by,
The gray spires of Oxford
Against a pearl-gray sky.
My heart was with the Oxford men
Who went abroad to die.

The years go fast in Oxford,
The golden years and gay,
The hoary Colleges look down
On careless boys at play,
But when the bugles sounded war!
They put their games away.

They left the peaceful river,
The cricket-field, the squad,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The shaven lawns of Oxford
To seek a bloody sod,—
They gave their merry youth away
For country and for God.

God rest you, happy gentlemen,
Who laid your good lives down,
Who took the khaki and the gun
Instead of cap and gown.
God bring you to a fairer place
Than even Oxford town.

Winifred M. Letts

91

Conscripts

“**F** ALL in, that awkward squad, and strike no more
Attractive attitudes! Dress by the right!
The luminous rich colours that you wore
Have changed to hueless khaki in the night.
Magic? What's magic got to do with you?
There's no such thing! Blood's red and skies are
blue.”

They gasped and sweated, marching up and down.
I drilled them till they cursed my raucous shout.
Love chucked his lute away and dropped his crown.
Rhyme got sore heels and wanted to fall out.
“Left, right! Press on your butts!” They looked at
me
Reproachful; how I longed to set them free!

THE BOOK OF

I gave them lectures on Defence, Attack;
They fidgeted and shuffled, yawned and sighed,
And boggled at my questions. Joy was slack,
And Wisdom gnawed his fingers, gloomy-eyed.
Young Fancy — how I loved him all the while —
Stared at his note-book with a rueful smile.

Their training done, I shipped them all to France.
Where most of those I'd loved too well got killed.
Rapture and pale Enchantment and Romance,
And many a sickly, slender lord who'd filled
My soul long since with litanies of sin,
Went home, because they couldn't stand the din.

But the kind, common ones that I despised,
(Hardly a man of them I'd count as friend),
What stubborn-hearted virtues they disguised!
They stood and played the hero to the end,
Won gold and silver medals bright with bars,
And marched resplendent home with crowns and stars.

Siegfried Sassoon

92

Youth and Age

I

YOUTH

OUTSIDE the church the mourning children cried
For some old man who died of ripe old age,
Mourning his short appearance on this stage.
They said: "He was but seventy, and then he died."

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

II

THE OLD

Throughout this dreadful war we sit and sigh,
For all the youthful millions that must die.
Yet still we see God's mercy, and we say
"They knew not sorrow, cast their lives away
In all their powerful promise of the spring.
They saw not autumn, thus were doubly blest;
They never lost their faculties," we sing.
Warming our withered hands; "Perhaps it's for the
best.

Their loss was cruel, or shall we say their gain,
Yet it's the country's glory, and its pain."
And thus eternally old age shall sit
Mouthing youth's sorrows for its benefit.
Why can't the old keep quiet, and sit and sigh?
Or, failing that, why can't they fail and die?

Osbert Sitwell

93

Before Action

I SIT beside the brazier's glow,
And, drowsing in the heat,
I dream of daffodils that blow
And lambs that frisk and bleat —

Black lambs that frolic in the snow
Among the daffodils,
In a far orchard that I know
Beneath the Malvern hills.

THE BOOK OF

Next year the daffodils will blow,
And lambs will frisk and bleat;
But I'll not feel the brazier's glow,
Nor any cold or heat . . .

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

94

The Iron Music

THE French guns roll continuously
And our guns, heavy, slow;
Along the Ancre, sinuously,
The transport wagons go,
And the dust is on the thistles
And the larks sing up on high . . .
*But I see the Golden Valley
Down by Tintern on the Wye.*

For it's just nine weeks last Sunday
Since we took the Chepstow train,
And I'm wondering if one day
We shall do the like again;
For the four-point-two's come screaming
Thro' the sausages on high;
*So there's little use in dreaming
How we walked above the Wye.*

Dust and corpses in the thistles
Where the gas shells burst like snow,
And the shrapnel screams and whistles
On the Bécourt road below,
And the High Wood bursts and bristles

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Where the mine-clouds foul the sky . . .
*But I'm with you up at Wyndcroft,
Over Tintern on the Wye.*

Ford Madox Hueffer

95 *To the Poet Before Battle*

NOW, youth, the hour of thy dread passion comes,
Thy lovely things must all be laid away;
And thou, as others, must face the riven day
Unstirred by rattle of the rolling drums
Or bugles' strident cry. When mere noise numbs
The sense of being, the sick soul doth sway,
Remember thy great craft's honour, that they may say
Nothing in shame of poets. Then the crumbs
Of praise the little versemen joyed to take
Shall be forgotten; then they must know we are
For all our skill in words, equal in might
And strong of mettle as those we honoured. Make
The name of poet terrible in just war,
And like a crown of honour upon the fight.

Ivor Gurney.

96 *The Fear*

I DO not fear to die
'Neath the open sky,
To meet death in the fight
Face to face, upright.

THE BOOK OF

But when at last we creep
Into a hole to sleep,
I tremble, cold with dread,
Lest I wake up dead.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

97

The Question

I WONDER if the old cow died or not,
Gey bad she was the night I left, and sick.
Dick reckoned she would mend. He knows a lot —
At least he fancies so himself, does Dick.

Dick knows a lot. But maybe I did wrong
To leave the cow to him, and come away.
Over and over like a silly song
These words keep humming in my head all day.

And all I think of, as I face the foe
And take my lucky chance of being shot,
Is this — that if I'm hit, I'll never know
Till Doomsday if the old cow died or not.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

98

In the Trenches

1

NOT that we are weary,
Not that we fear,
Not that we are lonely
Though never alone —

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Not these, not these destroy us;
But that each rush and crash
Of mortar and shell,
Each cruel bitter shriek of bullet
That tears the wind like a blade,
Each wound on the breast of earth,
Of Demeter, our Mother,
Wounds us also,
Severs and rends the fine fabric
Of the wings of our frail souls,
Scatters into dust the bright wings
Of Psyche!

II

Impotent,
How impotent is all this clamour,
This destruction and contest . . .

Night after night comes the moon
Haughty and perfect;
Night after night the Pleiades sing
And Orion swings his belt across the sky.
Night after night the frost
Crumbles the hard earth.
Soon the spring will drop flowers
And patient, creeping stalk and leaf
Along these barren lines
Where the huge rats scuttle
And the hawk shrieks to the carrion crow.

Can you stay them with your noise?
Then kill winter with your cannon,

THE BOOK OF

Hold back Orion with your bayonets
And crush the spring leaf with your armies!

Richard Aldington

99

Dreamers

SOLDIERS are citizens of death's grey land,
Drawing no dividend from time's to-morrows.
In the great hour of destiny they stand,
Each with his feuds, and jealousies, and sorrows.
Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.
Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin
They think of firelit homes, clean beds, and wives.

I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,
And mocked by hopeless longing to regain
Bank-holidays, and picture-shows, and spats,
And going to the office in the train.

Siegfried Sassoon

100

Dusk

To J. C.

THERE where the brown leaves fall
from elm and chestnut and plane-tree;
here where the brown leaves drift
along the paths to the lake

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

where the waterfowl breast the waves
that are ridged by the wind,—

you spoke of your art and life,
of men you had known who betrayed you,
men who fell short of friendship
and women who fell short of love;
but abiding beyond them, your art
held you to life, transformed it, became it,
and so you were free.

And I told you of all my weakness,—
my growing strength to resist
the appeal to my heart and eyes
of sorrowful, beautiful things;
and the strength of this outer husk
I had permitted to grow and protect me
was its pitiful measure.

You said: There are cracks in the husk.
It grew to your measure perhaps once;
but you are now breaking through it, and soon
it will fall apart and away from you.
Like a tree content with its fate,
you would not have known it was there
if it had grown to remain.

The cold wind blew the brown leaves
on to the lovers beneath,
who crept closer together for warmth
and closer still for love.

THE BOOK OF

The peacocks perched in the branches
hawked their harsh cry at the golden
round moon that loomed over the tree-tops.

And the sound of our feet on the gravel
for a time was answer enough
to the broken mesh of our thoughts.

I said: I have wife and children,
a girl and a boy: I love them;
the gold of their hair is all the gold
of my thoughts; the blue of their eyes
is all the purity of my vision;
the rhythm of their life is more to be watched
than the cadences of my poems.

And you asked me:
Have you taken refuge behind them?
Do you not fear to lose your life
in saving it for them?
Be brave! Be brave! The waters are deep,
the waves run high; but you are a swimmer:
strike out!

The cold wind blew the brown leaves
deeper and deeper into the dusk:
the peacocks had hushed their cries;
the moon had turned her gold into silver,
and between the black lace of two trees
one star shone clearly.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

O night!
have I deserved your beauty?

F. S. Flint

101 *The Birds Flit Unafraid*

From "BATTLE OF THE MARNE"

"**T**HE birds flit unafraid
Through the great cannonade;
And, O Cannoniers, though ill
The forests take your skill
And as by winter nipp'd
Scatter leaves bullet-stript
Down the shell-ravaged road —
Still, in its dark abode,
In the branches of God,
The Soul sings on alone;
You may blow the dead from their crypt —
Not the dream from its throne!"

Herbert Trench

102 *A Mystic as Soldier*

I LIVED my days apart,
Dreaming fair songs for God,
By the glory in my heart
Covered and crowned and shod.

Now God is in the strife,
And I must seek Him there,

THE BOOK OF

Where death outnumbered life,
And fury smites the air.

I walk the secret way
With anger in my brain.
O music through my clay,
When will you sound again?

Siegfried Sassoon

103

Terror

I

THOSE of the earth envy us,
Envy our beauty and frail strength;
Those of the wind and the moon
Envy our pain.

II

For as a doe that has never borne child
We were swift to fly from terror;
And as fragile edged steel
We turned, we pierced, we endured.

III

We have known terror:
The terror of the wind and silent shadows,
The terror of great heights,
The terror of the worm,
The terror of thunder and fire,
The terror of water and slime,
The terror of horror and fear,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The terror of desire and pain —
The terror of apathy.

IV

As a beast, as an arrow of pine,
Terror cleft us,
Tore us in envy away,
So that for month upon month
Pain wore us, hope left us, despair clutched us.
For they of the earth envied us,
Envied our beauty and strength.

V

Yet because, though we faltered and wept,
We held fast, clung close to our love,
Scorned hate even as they scorned us,
Some god has lightened our lives,
Given back the cool mouth of song
And the hands that blossom of fire,
Given, too, the mouth crushed like a flower
Which unpetals in marvellous ways,
The limbs that are hard and straight
With maidenly thews and blood,
Given these so that day is aflame
And night shot golden with shafts.

VI

We have suffered, we have bled,
And those of the wind and the moon
Envy our pain, the pain of the terror,
The delight no terror could slay.

Richard Aldington

THE BOOK OF

104

Into Battle

THE naked earth is warm with spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze;
And life is colour and warmth and light.
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is dead who will not fight;
And who dies fighting has increase.

The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
Speed with the light-foot winds to run
And with the trees to newer birth;
And find, when fighting shall be done,
Great rest, and fullness after dearth.

All the bright company of Heaven
Hold him in their high comradeship,
The Dog-Star, and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip.
The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend;
They gently speak in the windy weather;
They guide to valley and ridge's end.

The kestrel hovering by day,
And the little owls that call by night,
Bid him be swift and keen as they,
As keen of ear, as swift of sight.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The blackbird sings to him, " Brother, brother,
If this be the last song you shall sing,
Sing well, for you may not sing another;
Brother, sing."

In dreary, doubtful, waiting hours,
Before the brazen frenzy starts,
The horses show him nobler powers
O patient eyes, courageous hearts!

And when the burning moment breaks,
And all things else are out of mind,
And only joy of battle takes
Him by the throat, and makes him blind,

Through joy and blindness he shall know
Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
That it be not the Destined Will.

The thundering line of battle stands,
And in the air death moans and sings;
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.

Julian Grenfell

105

The Assault Heroic

DOWN in the mud I lay,
Tired out by my long day
Of five damned days and nights.

THE BOOK OF

Five sleepless days and nights . .
Dream-snatched, and set me where
The dungeon of Despair
Looms over Desolate Sea,
Frowning and threatening me
With aspect high and steep —
A most malignant keep.
My foes that lay within
Shouted and made a din,
Hooted and grinned and cried:
“To-day we’ve killed your pride:
To-day your ardour ends.
We’ve murdered all your friends:
We’ve undermined by stealth
Your happiness and your health.
We’ve taken away your hope;
Now you may droop and mope
To misery and to Death.”
But with my spear of Faith,
Stout as an oaken rafter,
With my round shield of laughter,
With my sharp, tongue-like sword
That speaks a bitter word,
I stood beneath the wall
And there defied them all.
The stones they cast I caught
And alchemized with thought
Into such lumps of gold
As dreaming misers hold.
The boiling oil they threw
Fell in a shower of dew,
Refreshing me; the spears

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Flew harmless by my ears,
Struck quivering in the sod;
There, like the prophet's rod,
Put leaves out, took firm root,
And bore me instant fruit.
My foes were all astounded,
Dumbstricken and confounded,
Gaping in a long row;
They dared not thrust nor throw.
Thus, then, I climbed a steep
Buttress and won the keep,
And laughed and proudly blew
My horn, "*Stand to! Stand to!*
Wake up, sir! Here's a new
Attack! Stand to! Stand to!"

Robert Graves

106

The Assault

THE beating of the guns grows louder.
 "*Not long, boys, now.*"
My heart burns whiter, fearfuller, prouder.
Hurricanes grow
As guns redouble their fire.
Through the shaken periscope peeping,
I glimpse their wire:
Black earth, fountains of earth rise, leaping,
Spouting like shocks of meeting waves.
Death's fountains are playing.
Shells like shrieking birds rush over;

THE BOOK OF

Crash and din rises higher.
A stream of lead raves
Over us from the left . . . (we safe under cover!)
Crash! Reverberation! Crash!
Acrid smoke billowing. Flash upon flash.
Black smoke drifting. The German line
Vanishes in confusion, smoke. Cries, and cry
Of our men, "*Gah, ycr swine!*
Ye're for it" die
In a hurricane of shell.

One cry:
"*We're comin' soon! look out!*"
There is opened hell
Over there; fragments fly.
Rifles and bits of men whirled at the sky:
Dust, smoke, thunder! A sudden bout
Of machine guns chattering . . .
And redoubled battering.
As if in fury at their daring! . . .

No good staring.

Time soon now . . . home . . . house on a sunny
hill . . .
Gone like a flickered page:
Time soon now . . . zero . . . will engage . . .

A sudden thrill —
"Fix bayonets!"
Gods! we have our fill
Of fear, hysteria, exultation, rage,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Rage to kill.

My heart burns hot, whiter and whiter,
Contracts tighter and tighter,
Until I stifle with the will
Long forged, now used
(Though utterly strained)—
O pounding heart,
Baffled, confused,
Heart panged, head singing, dizzily pained—
To do my part.

Blindness a moment. Sick.
There the men are!
Bayonets ready: click!
Time goes quick;
A stumbled prayer . . . somehow a blazing star
In a blue night . . . where?
Again prayer.
The tongue trips. Start:
How's time? Soon now. Two minutes or less.
The gun's fury mounting higher . . .
Their utmost. I lift a silent hand. Unseen I bless
Those hearts will follow me.
And beautifully,
Now beautifully my will grips.
Soul calm and round and filmed and white!

A shout: "Men, no such order as retire!"
I nod.

The whistle's 'twixt my lips . . .
I catch
A wan, worn smile at me.

THE BOOK OF

Dear men!
The pale wrist-watch . . .
The quiet hand ticks on amid the din.
The guns again
Rise to a last fury, to a rage, a lust:
Kill! Pound! Kill! Pound! Pound!
Now comes the thrust!
My part . . . dizziness . . . will . . . but trust
These men. The great guns rise;
Their fury seems to burst the earth and skies!

They lift.

Gather, heart, all thoughts that drift:
Be steel, soul,
Compress thyself
Into a round, bright whole.
I cannot speak.

Time. Time!

I hear my whistle shriek,
Between teeth set;
I fling an arm up,
Scramble up the grime
Over the parapet!
I'm up. Go on.
Something meets us.
Head down into the storm that greets us.
A wail.
Lights. Blurr.
Gone.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

On, on. Leăd. Leăd. Hail.
Spatter. Whirr! Whirr!
*"Toward that patch of brown:
Direction left."* Bullets a stream.
Devouring thought crying in a dream.
Men, crumpled, going down . . .
Go on. Go.
Deafness Numbness The loudening tornado
Bullets Mud. Stumbling and skating.
My voice's strangled shout:
"Steady pace, boys!"
The still light: gladness.
"Look, sir. Look out!"
Ha! ha! Bunched figures waiting.
Revolver levelled quick!
Flick! Flick!
Red as blood.
Germanis. Germans.
Good! O good!
Cool madness.

Robert Nichols

107 *To Any Dead Officer*

WELL, how are things in Heaven? I wish you'd
say,
Because I'd like to know that you're all right.
Tell me, have you found everlasting day,
Or been sucked in by everlasting night?
For when I shut my eyes your face shows pain;
I hear you make some cheery old remark —

THE BOOK OF

I can rebuild you in my brain,
Though you've gone out patrolling in the dark.

You hated tours of trenches; you were proud
Of nothing more than having good years to spend;
Longed to get home and join the careless crowd
Of chaps who work in peace with Time for friend.
That's all washed out now. You're beyond the wire:
No earthly chance can send you crawling back:
You've finished with machine-gun fire—
Knocked over in a hopeless dud-attack.

Somehow I always thought you'd get done in,
Because you were so desperate keen to live;
You were all out to try and save your skin,
Well knowing how much the world had got to give.
You joked at shells and talked the usual "shop,"
Stuck to your dirty job and did it fine:
With "Jesus Christ! when *will* it stop?"
Three years . . . It's Hell unless we break their line.

So when they told me you'd been left for dead
I wouldn't believe them, feeling it *must* be true.
Next week the bloody Roll of Honour said
"Wounded and missing"—(That's the thing to do
When lads are left in shell-holes dying slow,
With nothing but blank sky and wounds that ache,
Moaning for water till they know
It's night, and then it's not worth while to wake!)

* * * * *

Good-bye, old lad! Remember me to God,
And tell Him that our Politicians swear

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

They won't give in till Prussian Rule's been trod
Under the Heel of England . . . Are you there? . . .
Yes . . . and the War won't end for at least two years;
But we've got stacks of men . . . I'm blind with
tears,
Staring into the dark. Cheero!
I wish they'd killed you in a decent show.
Siegfried Sassoon

108

By the Wood

HOW still the day is, and the air how bright!
A thrush sings and is silent in the wood;
The hillside sleeps dizzy with heat and light;
A rhythmic murmur fills the quietude;
A woodpecker prolongs his leisured flight,
Rising and falling on the solitude.

But there are those who far from yon wood lie,
Buried within the trench where all were found,
A weight of mould oppresses every eye,
Within that cabin close their limbs are bound,
And there they rot amid the long, profound,
Disastrous silence of grey earth and sky.

These once, too, rested where now rests but one,
Who scarce can lift his panged and heavy head.
Who drinks in grief the hot light of the sun,
Whose eyes watch dully the green branches spread,
Who feels his currents ever slower run,
Whose lips repeat a silent ". . . Dead! all dead!"

THE BOOK OF

O youths to come shall drink air warm and bright,
Shall hear the bird cry in the sunny wood,
All my Young England fell to-day in fight:
That bird, that wood, was ransomed by our blood!

I pray you when the drum rolls let your mood
Be worthy of our deaths and your delight.
Robert Nichols

109 *Songs from an Evil Wood*

I

THERE is no wrath in the stars,
They do not rage in the sky;
I look from the evil wood
And find myself wondering why.

Why do they not scream out
And grapple star against star,
Seeking for blood in the wood
As all things round me are?

They do not glare like the sky
Or flash like the deeps of the wood;
But they shine softly on
In their sacred solitude.

To their high, happy haunts
Silence from us has flown,
She whom we loved of old
And know it now she is gone.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

When will she come again,
Though for one second only?
She whom we loved is gone
And the whole world is lonely.

II

Somewhere lost in the haze
The sun goes down in the cold,
And birds in this evil wood
Chirrup home as of old:

Chirrup, stir, and are still
On the high twigs frozen and thin.
There is no more noise of them now,
And the long night sets in.

Of all the wonderful things
That I have seen in the wood,
I marvel most at the birds
And their wonderful quietude.

For a giant smites with his club
All day the tops of the hill,
Sometimes he rests at night,
Oftener he beats them still.

And a dwarf with a grim black mane
Raps with repeated rage
All night in the valley below
On the wooden walls of his cage.

THE BOOK OF

And the elder giants come
Sometimes, tramping from far
Through the weird and flickering light
Made by an earthly star.

And the giant with his club,
And the dwarf with rage in his breath,
And the elder giants from far,
They are all the children of Death.

They are all abroad to-night
And are breaking the hills with their brood,
And the birds are all asleep
Even in Plug Street Wood!

III

The great guns of England, they listen mile on mile
To the boasts of a broken War-Lord; they lift their
throats and smile;
But the old woods are fallen
For a while.

The old woods are fallen; yet will they come again,
They will come back some springtime with the warm
winds and the rain
For Nature guardeth her children
Never in vain.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

They will come back some season; it may be a hundred
years;

It is all one to Nature with the centuries that are hers;
She shall bring back her children
And dry all their tears.

But the tears of a would-be War-Lord shall never
cease to flow.

He shall weep for the poisoned armies whenever the
gas-winds blow,

He shall always weep for his widows,
And all Hell shall know.

The tears of a pitiless Kaiser shallow they'll flow
and wide,

Wide as the desolation made by his silly pride

When he slaughtered a little people
To stab France in her side.

Over the ragged cinders they shall flow on and on
With the listless falling of streams that find not ob-
livion,

For ages and ages of years
Till the last star is gone.

IV

I met with Death in his country,
With his scythe and his hollow eye,
Walking the roads of Belgium.

I looked and he passed me by.

THE BOOK OF

Since he passed me by in Plug Street,
In the wood of the evil name,
I shall not now lie with the heroes,
I shall not fare their fame,

I shall never be as they are,
A name in the lands of the Free,
Since I looked on Death in Flanders
And he did not look at me.

Lord Dunsany

110 *It's a Queer Time*

IT'S hard to know if you're alive or dead
When steel and fire go roaring through your head.

One moment you'll be crouching at your gun
Traversing, mowing heaps down half in fun:
The next, you choke and clutch at your right breast—
No time to think—leave all—and off you go . . .
To Treasure Island where the spice winds blow,
To lovely groves of mango, quince and lime?
Breathe no good-bye, but ho, for the Red West!
It's a queer time.

You're charging madly at them yelling "Fag!"
When somehow something gives and your feet drag.
You fall and strike your head; yet feel no pain
And find . . . you're digging tunnels through the hay
In the Big Barn, 'cause it's a rainy day.
Oh springy hay, and lovely beams to climb!

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

You're back in the old sailor suit again.
It's a queer time.

Or you'll be dozing safe in your dug-out —
A great roar — the trench shakes and falls about —
You're struggling, gasping, struggling, then . . . hullo!
Elsie comes tripping gaily down the trench,
Hanky to nose — that lyddite makes a stench —
Getting her pinafore all over grime.
Funny! because she died ten years ago!
It's a queer time.

The trouble is, things happen much too quick;
Up jump the Boches, rifles thump and click,
You stagger, and the whole scene fades away:
Even good Christians don't like passing straight
From Tipperary or their Hymn of Hate
To Alleluiah-chanting, and the chime
Of golden harps . . . and . . . I'm not well to-day . . .
It's a queer time.

Robert Graves

III

Back

THEY ask me where I've been,
And what I've done and seen.
But what can I reply
Who know it wasn't I,
But some one just like me,
Who went across the sea
And with my head and hands

THE BOOK OF

Killed men in foreign lands . . .
Though I must bear the blame
Because he bore my name.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson.

112

The Return

HE went, and he was gay to go:
And I smiled on him as he went.
My son—'twas well he couldn't know
My darkest dread, nor what it meant—

Just what it meant to smile and smile
And let my son go cheerily—
My son . . . and wondering all the while
What stranger would come back to me.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

113 *To an Officer in Regent Street*

LIKE some lean ghost who for a little space
Looks on the world again, and the clear skies,
Or mariner that from the sea doth rise
In vain, to find another in his place,
You walk with shades of death on your brown face
And look upon the street with dead men's eyes.

Fresh women throng beside you in the street
And painted women; but they seek in vain

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

To catch those haunted eyes, or turn again
From their slow course toward waiting death your feet.
You must pass lonely, on whose brow there meet
Abel's sharp anguish, and the curse of Cain.

Lucy Hawkins

114

To Germany

YOU are blind like us. Your hurt no man designed,
And no man claimed the conquest of your land.
But, gropers both through fields of thought confined,
We stumble and we do not understand.
You only saw your future bigly planned,
And we, the tapering paths of our own mind,
And in each other's dearest ways we stand,
And hiss and hate. And the blind fight the blind.

When it is peace, then we may view again
With new-won eyes each other's truer form,
And wonder. Grown more loving-kind and warm,
We'll grasp firm hands and laugh at the old pain,
When it is peace. But, until peace the storm,
The darkness, and the thunder and the rain.

Charles Hamilton Sorley

115

The Rainbow

I WATCH the white dawn gleam,
To the thunder of guns.
I hear the hot shells scream

THE BOOK OF

Through skies as sweet as a dream
Where the silver dawn-break runs.
And stabbing of light
Scorches the virginal white.
But I feel in my being the old, high, sanctified thrill,
And I thank the gods that the dawn is beautiful still.

From death that hurtles by
I crouch in the trench day-long,
But up to a cloudless sky
From the ground where our dead men lie
A brown lark soars in song.
Through the tortured air,
Rent by shrapnel's flare,
Over the troubleless dead he carols his fill.
And I thank the gods that the birds are beautiful still.

Where the parapet is low
And level with the eye
Poppies and cornflowers grow
And the corn sways to and fro
In a pattern against the sky.
The gold stalks hide
Bodies of men who died
Charging at dawn through the dew to be killed or to
kill.
I thank the gods that the flowers are beautiful still.

When night falls dark we creep
In silence to our dead.
We dig a few feet deep
And leave them there to sleep —

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

But blood at night is red,
Yea, even at night,
And a dead man's face is white.
And I dry my hands, that are also trained to kill,
And I look at the stars — for the stars are beautiful
still.

Leslie Coulson

116 Discharged — Totally Disabled

SO death was cheated of you! Here you lie
In your own place beside me: you did not die!
I must repeat it, learn this truth by heart:
You did not die! You did not die! No part
Of you is dead! O, sleep, my darling, sleep:
You are at home, you must not hear me weep.
When I have learned my lesson I shall not cry —
You did not die! You did not, did not die!
I will not gull myself. I'll hold the light
Closer, that I may see each ugly trace
Death made in missing you: he clawed your face
Most hideously of all, because he knew
I, his foe, loved its beauty; blew
Blood in your eyes, seared the lids black and bare,
Branded your brows — my blessing rested there —
Then as a treacherous coward, beaten, afraid,
Lunges to mark his conqueror, he laid
His twisted seal upon your lips and fled,
Harried by love and me!

O piteous head!

O bloodshot, staring eyes! O branded brow,

THE BOOK OF

O tortured lips, how should I know you now?
No feature is the same, no look, no sign
Of what I knew is left to prove you mine.
You cannot smile! That was death's ugliest blow!
You cannot smile! The lips I used to know
Smiled in their sleep for me; they laughed all day
For every changing thought a different way
Of smiling for my joy, but they smiled best
In sleep, against my heart, kissed into rest.
And now you cannot smile, all hacked awry,
O warm, gay lips — and yet you did not die!

Beaten, death! You are beaten! Though I see
This mask of him you have returned to me,
Though every wound gapes by this flickering light,
I have another lamp! Another sight!
His spirit lives, and all his beauty lives!
You cannot pilfer in my soul! Love gives
His gift immortally! Not time's decay,
Nor violence, nor thou can take away
Beauty made mine by love! Even now I find
His living beauty flaming in my mind,
Burning out all your scars, old foe, and here,
Here on the pillow smiles serenely clear
His own familiar face. The mask's a lie!
Nothing of him is dead! He cannot die.

Irene Rutherford McLeod

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

117

To a Bull-Dog

(*W. H. S., Capt. [Acting Major] R. F. A.; killed
April 12, 1917*)

WE shan't see Willy any more, Mamie,
He won't be coming any more:
He came back once and again and again,
But he won't get leave any more.

We looked from the window and there was his cab,
And we ran downstairs like a streak,
And he said, "Hullo, you bad dog," and you crouched
to the floor,
Paralysed to hear him speak.

And then let fly at his face and his chest
Till I had to hold you down,
While he took off his cap and his gloves and his coat,
And his bag and his thonged Sam Browne.

We went upstairs to the studio,
The three of us, just as of old,
And you lay down and I sat and talked to him
As round the room he strolled.

Here in the room where, years ago
Before the old life stopped,
He worked all day with his slippers and his pipe,
He would pick up the threads he'd dropped,

THE BOOK OF

Fondling all the drawings he had left behind,
Glad to find them all still the same,
And opening the cupboards to look at his belongings
. . . Every time he came.

But now I know what a dog doesn't know,
Though you'll thrust your head on my knee,
And try to draw me from the absent-mindedness
That you find so dull in me.

And all your life you will never know
What I wouldn't tell you even if I could,
That the last time we waved him away
Willy went for good.

But sometimes as you lie on the hearthrug
Sleeping in the warmth of the stove,
Even through your muddled old canine brain
Shapes from the past may rove.

You'll scarcely remember, even in a dream,
How we brought home a silly little pup,
With a big square head and little crooked legs
That could scarcely bear him up,

But your tail will tap at the memory
Of a man whose friend you were,
Who was always kind though he called you a naughty
dog
When he found you on his chair ;

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Who'd make you face a reproving finger
And solemnly lecture you
Till your head hung downwards and you looked very
sheepish
And you'll dream of your triumphs too.

Of summer evening chases in the garden
When you dodged us all about with a bone:
We were three boys, and you were the cleverest,
But now we're two alone.

When summer comes again,
And the long sunsets fade,
We shall have to go on playing the feeble game for
two
That since the war we've played.

And though you run expectant as you always do
To the uniforms we meet,
You'll never find Willy among all the soldiers
In even the longest street,

Nor in any crowd; yet, strange and bitter thought,
Even now were the old words said,
If I tried the old trick and said 'Where's Willy?'
You would quiver and lift your head,

And your brown eyes would look to ask if I was serious,
And wait for the word to spring.
Sleep undisturbed: I shan't say *that* again,
You innocent old thing.

THE BOOK OF

I must sit, not speaking, on the sofa,
While you lie asleep on the floor;
For he's suffered a thing that dogs couldn't dream of,
And he won't be coming here any more.

J. C. Squire

118

When It's Over

“**Y**OUNG soldier, what will you be
When it's all over?”

“I shall get out and across the sea,
Where land's cheap and a man can thrive.
I shall make money. Perhaps I'll wive
In a place where there's room for a family,
I'm a bit of a rover.”

“Young soldier, what will you be
At the last ‘Dismiss’?”

“Bucked to get back to old Leicester Square,
Where there's good champagne and a glad winking
And no more ‘Veery Lights’ damnably blinking
Their weary, dreary, white-eyed stare.
I'll be out of this.”

“Young soldier, what will you be
When they sign the peace?”

“Blowed if I know; perhaps I shall stick it.
The job's all right if you take it steady.
After all, somebody's got to be ready,
And tons of the blighters 'll get their ticket.
Wars don't cease.”

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

" Young soldier, what will you be
At the day's end? "

" Tired's what I'll be. I shall lie on the beach
Of a shore where the rippling waves just sigh,
And listen and dream and sleep and lie
Forgetting what I've had to learn and teach
And attack and defend."

" Young soldier, what will you be
When you're next a-bed? "

" God knows what; but it doesn't matter,
For whenever I think, I always remember
The Belgians massacred that September,
And England's pledge — and the rest seems chatter.
What if I *am* dead? "

" Young soldier, what will you be
When it's all done? "

" I shall come back and live alone
On an English farm in the Sussex Weald,
Where the wounds in my mind will be slowly sealed,
And the graves in my heart will be overgrown;
And I'll sit in the sun."

" Young soldier, what will you be
At the ' Last Post ' ? "

" Cold, cold in the tender earth,
A cold body in foreign soil;
But a happy spirit fate can't spoil,
And an extra note in the blackbird's mirth
From a khaki ghost."

Max Plowman

THE BOOK OF

119

In Flanders Fields

IN Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place, and in the sky,
The larks, still bravely singing, fly.
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead; short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe!
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high!
If ye break faith with us who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrac

120

The Old Houses of Flanders

THE old houses of Flanders
They watch by the high cathedrals;
They overtop the high town-halls;
They have eyes, mournful, tolerant and sardonic, for
the ways of men

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

In the high, white tiled gables,
The rain and the night have settled down on Flanders;
It is all wet darkness; you can see nothing.

Then those old eyes, mournful, tolerant and sardonic,
Look at great, sudden, red lights,
Look upon the shades of the cathedrals;
And the golden rods of the illuminated rain,
For a second . . .

And those old eyes,
Very old eyes that have watched the ways of men for
 many generations,
Close for ever.
The high, white shoulders of the gables
Slouch together for a consultation,
Slant drunkenly over in the lea of the flaming cathedrals.

They are no more, the old houses of Flanders.

Ford Madox Hueffer

121

Pic-nic

WE lay and ate sweet hurt-berries
In the bracken of Hurt Wood.
Like a quire of singers singing low
The dark pines stood.

Behind us climbed the Surrey hills,
Wild, wild in greenery:

THE BOOK OF

At our feet the downs of Sussex broke
To an unseen sea.

And life was bound in a still ring
Drowsy, and quiet and sweet . . .
When heavily up the south-east wind
The great guns beat.

We did not wince, we did not weep,
We did not curse or pray;
We drowsily heard, and some one said
"They sound clear to-day."

We did not shake with pity and pain,
Or sicken and blanch white.
We said: "If the wind's from over there
There'll be rain to-night."

Once pity we knew, and rage we knew,
And pain we knew, too well,
As we stared and peered dizzily
Through the gates of Hell.

But now Hell's gates are an old tale;
Remote the anguish seems;
The guns are muffled and far away,
Dreams within dreams.

And far and far are Flanders mud,
And the pain of Picardy;
And the blood that runs there runs beyond
The wide waste sea.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

We are shut about by guarding walls:

(We have built them lest we run
Mad from dreaming of naked fear
And of black things done.)

We are ringed all round by guarding walls,
So high, they shut the view,
Not all the guns that shatter the world
Can quite break through.

Oh guns of France, oh guns of France.

Be still, you crash in vain . . .
Heavily up the south wind throb
Dull dreams of pain . . .

Be still, be still, south wind, lest your
Blowing should bring the rain . . .
We'll lie very quiet on Hurt hill,
And sleep once again.

Oh, we'll lie quite still, nor listen nor look,
While the earth's bounds reel and shake,
Lest, battered too long, our walls and we
Should break . . . should break . . .

Rose Macaulay

122

The Dying Patriot

DAY breaks on England down the Kentish hills,
Singing in the silence of the meadow-footing
rills,
Day of my dreams, O day!

THE BOOK OF

I saw them march from Dover, long ago,
With a silver cross before them, singing low,
Monks of Rome from their home where the blue seas
break in foam,
Augustine with his feet of snow.

Noon strikes on England, noon on Oxford town,
— Beauty she was statue cold — there's blood upon
her gown:

Noon of my dreams, O noon!
Proud and godly kings had built her, long ago,
With her towers and tombs and statues all arow,
With her fair and floral air and the love that lingers
there,
And the streets where the great men go.

Evening on the olden, the golden sea of Wales,
When the first star shivers and the last waves pales:
O evening dreams!

There's a house that Britons walked in, long ago,
Where now the springs of ocean fall and flow,
And the dead robed in red and sea-lilies overhead
Sway when the long winds blow.

Sleep not, my country: though night is here, afar
Your children of the morning are clamorous for war:
Fire in the night, O dreams!

Though she send you as she sent you, long ago,
South to desert, east to ocean, west to snow,
West of these out to seas colder than the Hebrides I
must go

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Where the fleet of stars is anchored, and the young
Star-captains glow.

James Elroy Flecker

123

Lepanto

WHITE founts falling in the Courts of the sun,
And the Soldan of Byzantium is smiling as they
run;
There is laughter like the fountains in the face of all
men feared,
It stirs the forest darkness, the darkness of his beard.
It curls the blood-red crescent, the crescent of his lips.
For the inmost sea of all the earth is shaken with his
ships.
They have dared the white republics up the capes of
Italy,
They have dashed the Adriatic round the Lion of the
Sea,
And the Pope has cast his arms abroad for agony and
loss,
And called the kings of Christendom for swords about
the Cross.
The cold queen of England is looking in the glass;
The shadow of the Valois is yawning at the Mass;
From evening isles fantastical rings faint the Spanish
gun,
And the Lord upon the Golden Horn is laughing in
the sun.
Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,

THE BOOK OF

Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince
has stirred,

Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half attained
stall,

The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the
wall,

The last and lingering troubadour to whom the bird
has sung,

That once went singing southward when all the world
was young.

In that enormous silence, tiny and unafraid,

Comes up along a winding road the noise of the
Crusade.

Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,

Don John of Austria is going to the war,

Stiff flags staining in the night-blasts cold

In the gloom black-purple, in the glint old gold.

Torchlight crimson on the copper kettle-drums,

Then the tuckets, then the trumpets, then the cannon,
and he comes.

Don John laughing in the brave beard curled,

Spurning of his stirrups like the thrones of all the
world,

Holding his head up for a flag of all the free.

Love-light of Spain — hurrah!

Death-light of Africa!

Don John of Austria

Is riding to the sea.

Mahound is in his paradise above the evening star,
(*Don John of Austria is going to the war*)

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

He moves a mighty turban on the timeless houri's
knees,
His turban that is woven of the sunsets and the seas.
He shakes the peacock gardens as he rises from his
case,
And he strides among the tree-tops and is taller than
the trees,
And his voice through all the garden is a thunder sent
to bring
Black Azrael and Ariel and Ammon on the wing.
Giants and the Genii,
Multiplex of wing and eye,
Whose strong obedience broke the sky
When Solomon was king.

They rush in red and purple from the red clouds of the
morn,
From temples where the yellow gods shut up their eyes
in scorn
They rise in green robes roaring from the green hells
of the sea
Where fallen skies and evil hues and eyeless creatures
be;
On them the sea-valves cluster and the grey sea-
forests curl,
Splashed with a splendid sickness, the sickness of the
pearl;
They swell in sapphire smoke out of the blue cracks of
the ground,—
They gather and they wonder and give worship to
Mahound.

THE BOOK OF

And he saith, " Break up the mountains where the
hermit-folk can hide,
And sift the red and silver sands lest bone of saint
abide,
And chase the Giaours flying night and day, not giving
rest,
For that which was our trouble comes again out of the
west.
We have set the seal of Solomon on all things under
sun,
Of knowledge and of sorrow and endurance of things
done,
But a noise is in the mountains, in the mountains,
and I know
The voice that shook our palaces — four hundred years
ago:
It is he that saith not ' Kismet ': it is he that knows
not Fate;
It is Richard, it is Raymond, it is Godfrey in the gate!
It is he whose loss is laughter when he counts the
wager worth,
Put down your feet upon him, that our peace be on the
earth."
For he heard drums groaning and he heard guns jar,
(*Don John of Austria is going to the war.*)
Sudden and still — hurrah!
Bolt from Iberia!
Don John of Austria
Is gone by Alcalar.

St. Michael's on his Mountain in the sea-roads of the
north
190

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

(Don John of Austria is girt and going forth.)

Where the grey seas glitter and the sharp tides shift
And the sea-folk labor and the red sails lift.

He shakes his lance of iron and he claps his wings of
stone;

The noise is gone through Normandy; the noise is gone
alone;

The North is full of tangled things and texts and ach-
ing eyes

And dead is all the innocence of anger and surprise,

And Christian killeth Christian in a narrow dusty
room,

And Christian dreadeth Christ that hath a newer face
of doom,

And Christian hateth Mary that God kissed in Galilee,
But Don John of Austria is riding to the sea.

Don John calling through the blast and the eclipse
Crying with the trumpet, with the trumpet of his lips,
Trumpet that sayeth ha!

Domino gloria!

Don John of Austria

Is shouting to the ships.

King Philip's in his closet with the Fleece about his
neck

(Don John of Austria is armed upon the deck.)

The walls are hung with velvet that is black and soft
as sin,

And little dwarfs creep out of it and little dwarfs
creep in.

He holds a crystal phial that has colours like the moon,
He touches, and it tingles, and he trembles very soon,

THE BOOK OF

And his face is as a fungus of a leprous white and
grey
Like plants in the high houses that are shuttered from
the day
And death is in the phial and the end of noble work,
But Don John of Austria has fired upon the Turk.
Don John's hunting, and his hounds have bayed —
Booms away past Italy the rumour of his raid.
Gun upon gun, ha ! ha !
Gun upon gun, hurrah !
Don John of Austria
Has loosed the cannonade.

The Pope was in his chapel before day or battle broke,
(*Don John of Austria is hidden in the smoke.*)
The hidden room in man's house where God sits all
the year,
The secret window whence the world looks small and
very dear.
He sees as in a mirror on the monstrous twilight sea
The crescent of his cruel ships whose name is mystery;
They fling great shadows fore-wards, making Cross and
Castle dark,
They veil the plumpèd lions on the galleys of St. Mark;
And above the ships are palaces of brown, black-
bearded chiefs,
And below the ships are prisons where with multitudi-
nous griefs,
Christian captives sick and sunless, all a laboring race
repines
Like a race in sunken cities, like a nation in the mines.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

They are lost like slaves that sweat, and in the skies
of morning hung

The stairways of the tallest gods when tyranny was
young.

They are countless, voiceless, hopeless as those fallen
or fleeing on

Before the high Kings' horses in the granite of Baby-
lon.

And many a one grows witless in his quiet room in
Hell

Where a yellow face looks inward through the lattice
of his cell,

And he finds his God forgotten, and he seeks no more
a sign —

(But Don John of Austria has burst the battle line!)

Don John pounding from the slaughter-painted poop,

Purpling all the ocean like a bloody pirate's sloop,

Scarlet running over on the silvers and the golds,

Breaking of the hatches up and bursting of the holds,

Thronging of the thousands up that labor under sea

White for bliss and blind for sun and stunned for
liberty.

Vivat Hispania!

Domino Gloria!

Don John of Austria

Has set his people free!

Cervantes on his galley sets the sword back in the
sheath

(Don John of Austria rides homeward with a wreath.)

And he sees across a weary land a straggling road in
Spain,

THE BOOK OF

Up which a lean and foolish knight forever rides in
vain,

And he smiles, but not as Sultans smile, and settles
back the blade. . . .

(*But Don John of Austria rides home from the
Crusade.*)

Gilbert K. Chesterton

124 *I am the Gilly of Christ*

I AM the gilly of Christ,
The mate of Mary's Son:
I run the roads at seeding time,
And when the harvest's done.

I sleep among the hills.
The heather is my bed;
I dip the termon-well for drink,
And pull the sloe for bread.

No eye has ever seen me,
But shepherds hear me pass,
Singing at fall of even
Along the shadowed grass.

The beetle is my bellman,
The meadow-fire my guide.
The bee and bat my ambling nags
When I have need to ride.

All know me only the Stranger,
Who sits on the Saxon's height;

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

He burned the bacach's little house
On last Saint Brigid's Night.

He sups off silver dishes,
And drinks in a golden horn,
But he will wake a wiser man
Upon the Judgment Morn!

I am the Gilly of Christ,
The mate of Mary's Son;
I run the roads at seeding time,
And when the harvest's done.

The seed I sow is lucky,
The corn I reap is red,
And whoso sings the Gill's Rann
Will never cry for bread.
Seosamh MacCathmhaoil (Joseph Campbell)

125 *Regnum Caelorum Vim Patitur*

WHEN our five-angled spears, that pierced the
world
And drew its life-blood, faint before the wall
Which hems its secret splendour — when we fall,
Lance broken, banner furled,
Before that calm invincible defence
Whereon our folly hurled
The piteous armies of intelligence —
Then, often-times, we know
How conquering mercy to the battle field

THE BOOK OF

Comes through the darkness, freely to bestow
The prize for which we fought
Not knowing what we sought,
And salve the wounds of those who would not yield.

He loves the valiant foe; he comes not out to meet
The craven soul made captive of its fear:
Not these the victories that to him are sweet!
But the impetuous soldiery of truth,
And knighthood of the intellectual quest,
Who ask not for his ruth
Nor would desire his rest:
These are to him most dear,
And shall in their surrender yet prevail.
Yea! at the end of unrewarded days,
By swift and secret ways
As on a sudden moonbeam shining clear,
Soft through the night shall slide upon their gaze
The thrice-defended vision of the Grail:
And when his peace hath triumphed, these shall be
The flower of his celestial chivalry.

And did you think, he saith
As to and fro he goes the trenches through,
My heart impregnable, that you must bring
The ballisters of faith
Their burning bolts to fling,
And all the cunning intricate device
Of human wit,
One little breach to make
That so you might attain to enter it?
Nay, on the other side

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Love's undefended postern is set wide:
But thus it is I woo
My dearest sons, that an ignoble ease
Shall never please,
Nor any smooth and open way entice.
Armed would I have them come
Against the mighty bastions of their home;
Out of high failure win
Their way within,
And from my conquering hand their birthright take.
Evclyn Underhill

126

Brother Fidelis

PASSING to Chapel thro' the high cloister'd way,
Brother Fidelis loitered to survey
Far, slumberous fields all wrapt in still moonlight
Laid plain, thro' chiselled windows, to his sight.

The Brother dropt his hands upon the stone
Of one low window. Sepia shadows, thrown
Across the pavement, made the light more clear
Upon his thoughtful face; no shade was there,

Tho' Suffering's heavy hand had drawn her lines
About his mouth; and near his eyes were signs
Of long night watchings and of fastings long—
Wherewith he trained his spirit to be strong.

Unknown the thoughts, the labour and the pain . . .
Before his eyes lay but the tender grain

THE BOOK OF

Lovingly gathered in that quiet patch
By one asleep beneath some cottage thatch.

Beyond the fields lay London. He had been
There once, toiling for life amid the mean
Toil of the streets; and then had drawn aside
From worldly lust, vainglorious days and pride.

'Twas better so; better to serve the Lord
Continually, than share Him with a horde
Of other gods. He had gained here, apart,
With the new name, Fidelis, a new heart.

He stood as still as the carved Virgin Maid
Above the Chapel door, whose Child was laid
Against her breast. So stood Fidelis there
As tho' the world were not, nor care on care.

The Chapel bell clanged from a turret high,
The Brother's sober Brethren shuffled by,
Casting strange shapes on the cold pavement's face.
Fidelis, woken, turned with them for Grace

Within the narrow door, passing below
The Mother Maid who smiled to see them go.
The praising voices died along the grey
Moonlighted quiet of the cloistered way.

Gwen Upcott

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

127

Two Carols

I

Flores apparuerunt in terra nostre

VERY still was all the land.
Very secret was the hour;
Darkness as a guard did stand
When the Rose brought forth her flower —
Rosa sine spina.

Long the road and hard the pain,
Chill and lowly was the shed:
See, upon the straw she's lain —
Straw, to make her childing-bed!
Virgo et regina.

Cold the welcome, sharp the smart;
Godhead treads the bitter way.
Only in the lowly heart
Is her babe brought forth to-day —
Genetrix divina.

II

Omnis creatura ingemiscit, et parturit usque adhuc.

SILENCE and darkness! land and sea
Await the ending of their pain.
Qui est in coelis now shall be
One with the world he made again.
Dominus tecum!

THE BOOK OF

So the angels say,
So may it be alway!

Poor Earth, that hast in exile long
Borne alien gods, thy travail cease!
Lift up, lift up, the mother's song:
Rex natus est, his name is Peace.
Dominus tecum!
So the angels says,
So may it be alway!

Adveniat regnum! in the heart
Love's childing-bed is made to-night.
There is he born that heals thy smart,
Emmanuel, the Light of Light!
Dominus tecum!
So the angels say,
So may it be alway!

Evelyn Underhill

128

Triptych

I.—FIRST PANEL: THE HILL

ON a day in Maytime mild
Mary sat on a hill-top with her child.
(Overhead in the calm sky's arching
The curled white clouds went slowly marching . .
But underneath the blue abyss
All was stiller than water is
Leagues under the surface of the sea.)
And all about her thick and free
Blossomed the dear familiar flowers.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

There, while her boy played through the hours,
And the high sun shook gold upon her,
Mary plaited a garland in his honour
Who should be the King of Kings;
And when 'tis done this song she sings.
As Jesus, tired and happy, rests
Curled in the hollow of her breasts:

“ In the shadow of my dress,
Out of the sun
And his fierce caress,
Sleep, my son.

“ Soft the air about the hill,
Scented, sunny, clear, and still;
Below in the woods the daffodil
Nods, and the shy anemone
Creeps up from the thicket to look on thee,
And ten thousand daisies meet
In an ocean of stars about thy feet.

“ Daisies have I strung for thee,
Darling boy,
Wee white blossoms that shall be
Dappled, ah! rosily
With thy blood,
When they nail thee to the wood
Cleft from out the crooked tree.
Can it be,
Daisies innocent and good,
That ye star black calvary?

THE BOOK OF

" Buttercups I make thy crown,
Darling boy.

(Lullaby, O lullaby!)

Son of sorrow, son of joy,
Pain and Paradise thou art,
Thou that sighest nestling down
In my breast, over my heart

That is a lake

Where the hidden tear-drops ache
To be free,

Till mounting upward for thy sake
Out they break,

Down they plash on me and thee.

" And Heaven in her charity
Drops seven tears on me and thee.

" This thy childhood's crown,
Flower on flower,

Wear thou in thy lullaby
Till thou facest the soldiers' frown
In thine iron hour,

Till the thorn they crown thee by
They press down:

Ah, the sharp points in my heart!

Ah, the sword, the sudden smart

Flaying me as 'twere a flame!

Crowned indeed, my son, thou art

With red flowers of pain and shame!

" Birds and butterflies and trees,
And the long hush of the breeze

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Shimmering over the silken grass,
What wouldst thou have more than these?
In the stall the ox and ass
Gazed on thee with tender eyes;
All things love thee; yet there lies
Some hid thing in thee breeds fear—
Brims not falls thy mother's tear.
Wherefore, baby, must thou go?
Rose, to be torn in sunder so?

Little bonny limbs, little bonny face,
My lamb, my torment, my disgrace!

"O baby, are thine eyelids closed
Faster than my eyes supposed?
With foxes must thy bed be maken,
A beggar with beggars must thou go,
To be at last forsworn, forsaken?
And bear alone thy cross also
Anigh to the foot of a bare hill?
To hang gibbeted and abhorred,
For passers-by to wish thee ill?
And to thrust against thy will

Through thy mother's bosom the sharpest sword?

"O baby, breathing so quietly,
Have thou mercy upon me!

That in thy madness
On thy lonely journey farest,
That understandest not nor carest
For me and my sadness!

Woe indeed! thou dost not know
Man cometh into this world in sorrow

THE BOOK OF

To spend in grief to-night, to-morrow
In sorrow the third day to go!

“O sleep, dear baby, and, heart, sleep;
Turn to thy slumber, golden, deep,
Of present possible happiness.
Let drop the daisies one by one
Over his body and his dress;
Afflicted eyes, see but thy son
Who sleeps secure from hurt, from harm,
Clasped to my breast, closed in my arm.

Who murmurs as the flowers by the faint wind
shaken,
And, putting forth sweet, sleepy hands,
Feels for the kisses he demands . . .
Slowly, belov'd, dost thou awaken,
And sure, in heaven there is no sign:
It is not true that thou shalt be taken,
Who for ever, for ever art mine, art mine!”

Into the west the calm white sun
Floated and sank. The day was done.
Mary returned, and as she went,
Above her, in the firmament,
The stars, that are the flowers of God,
Mirrored the flowery earth she trod.
Thus bore she on her destined child,
And while she wept, behold! he smiled,
And stretched his arms seeking a kiss . . .
Softly she kissed him, and a bliss,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Deeper than all her human tears,
Flooded her and put out her fears.

Oxford, *Early Spring*, 1911.

II.—SECOND AND CENTRE PANEL: THE TOWER

It was deep night, and over Jerusalem's low roofs
The moon floated, drifting through high vaporous
woofs.

The moonlight crept and glistened silent, solemn, sweet,
Over dome and column, up empty, endless street;
In the closed, scented gardens the rose loosed from
the stem

Her white showery petals; none regarded them;
The starry thicket breathed odours to the sentinel palm;
Silence possessed the city like a soul possessed by
calm.

Not a spark in the warren under the giant night,
Save where in a turret's lantern beamed a grave, still
light:

There in the topmost chamber a gold-eyed lamp was
lit—

Marvellous lamp in darkness, informing, redeeming it!
For, set in that tiny chamber, Jesus, the blessed and
doomed,

Spoke to the lone apostles as light to men entombed;
And spreading his hands in blessing, as one soon to
be dead.

He put soft enchantment into spare wine and bread.

THE BOOK OF

The hearts of the disciples were broken and full of
tears,
Because their lord, the spearless, was hedged about
with spears;
And in his face the sickness of departure had spread
a gloom,
At leaving his young friends friendless.
They could not forget the tomb.
He smiled subduedly, telling, in tones soft as voice
of the dove,
The endlessness of sorrow, the eternal solace of love;
And lifting the earthly tokens, wine and sorrowful
bread,
He bade them sup and remember one who lived and
was dead.
And they could not restrain their weeping.
But one rose up to depart,
Having weakness and hate of weakness raging within
his heart,
And bowed to the robed assembly whose eyes gleamed
wet in the light.
Judas arose and departed: night went out to the night.

Then Jesus lifted his voice like a fountain in an ocean
of tears,
And comforted his disciples and calmed and allayed
their fears.
But Judas wound down the turret, creeping from floor
to floor,
And would fly; but one leaning, weeping, barred him
beside the door.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And he knew her by her ruddy garment and two yet-
watching men:

Mary of Seven Evils, Mary Magdalen.

And he was frightened at her. She sighed: "I dreamed
him dead.

We sell the body for silver . . ."

Then Judas cried out and fled
Forth into the night! . . . The moon had begun to set;
A drear, deft wind went sifting, setting the dust afret;
Into the heart of the city Judas ran on and prayed
To stern Jehovah lest his deed make him afraid.

But in the tiny lantern, hanging as if on air,
The disciples sat unspeaking. Amaze and peace were
there.

For *his* voice, more lovely than song of all earthly
birds,
In accents humble and happy spoke slow, consoling
words.

Thus Jesus discoursed, and was silent, sitting upright,
and soon

Past the casement behind him slanted the sinking moon;
And, rising for Olivet, all stared, between love and
dread,

Seeing the torrid moon a ruddy halo behind his head.

Grayshott, *July*, 1914.

III.—THIRD PANEL: THE TREE

The crookèd tree creaked as its loaded bough dipped
And suddenly jerked up. The rope had slipped,

THE BOOK OF

And hideously Judas fell, and all the grass
Was soused and reddened where he was,
And the tree creaked its mirth . . .

Mid the hot sky
Appeared immediate dots tiny and high,
Till downward wound in batlike herds
Black, monstrous, gawky birds,
And, narrowing their rustling rings,
Alit, talons foremost. And with flat wings
Flapped in the branches, and glared, and croaked and
croaked,

While no compassionate human came and cloaked
The thing that stared up at the giddy day
With pale blue eyeballs and wry-lipped display
Of yellow teeth closed on the blue, bit tongue.
Overhead the light in silence hung,
And fiercely showed the sweaty, knotted hands
Clutching the rope about the swollen glands . . .
And the birds croaked and croaked, evilly eyeing
The thing so lying,

Which no commiserate pity came and cloaked,
But which soaked
The earth, so that the flies
Sizzily swung over its winkless eyes,
And in a crawling, shiny, busy brood
Blackened the sticky blood,
And tickled the tongue-choked mouth that sought to
cry

Bitterly and beseechingly
Against the judgment of th' unflinching sky.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The poor dead, lonely thing had not a shroud
From that still, frightful glare until a cloud
Of darkness, flowing like a dye
Over the edges of the sky,
Browned and put out the silent sun:
A benison
Of three hours' space.
And it had power
To put a shadow into that thing's face,
And th' invisible birds fell silent by its grace.

Thus Judas lay in shadow and all was still.

Then faint light, like water, began again to fill
The sky, and a whisper — came it from the grass,
Whispering dry and sparse,
Or from the air beyond the neighbouring hill? —
Ebbd, as a spirit on a sigh
Passing beyond alarm:
"It is finished!"

And there was calm
Under the empty tree and in the brightening sky.

Robert Nichols

Grayshott, July, 1914.

129

Simon the Cyrenean

*"And as they came out they found a man of Cyrene,
Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross."*

THIS is the tale from first to last; —
Outside Jerusalem

THE BOOK OF

I saw them lead a prisoner past
With thorns for diadem.
Broken and weak and driven fast
He fell at my garment's hem.

There stood no other stranger by
On me they laid his load.
The Cross whereon he was to die
I bore along the road,
I saw him nailed, I heard him cry
Forsaken of his God.

Now I am dead as well as he,
And, marvel strange to tell,
But him they nailed upon the tree
Is Lord of Heaven and Hell,
And judgeth who doth wickedly,
Rewardeth who doth well.

He has given to me the beacons four,
A Cross in the southern sky,
In token that his Cross I bore
In his extremity;
For one I never knew before
The day he came to die.

Lucy Lyttelton

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

130

Birthright

L ORD RAMESES of Egypt sighed
Because a summer evening passed;
And little Ariadne cried
That summer fancy fell at last
To dust; and young Verona died
When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know
Because the clouds of hawthorn keep
So short a state, and kisses go
To tombs unfathomably deep,
While Rameses and Romeo
And little Ariadne sleep.

John Drinkwater

131

Harvest

T HOUGH the long seasons seem to separate
Sower and reaper or deeds dreamed and done,
Yet when a man reaches the Ivory Gate
Labour and life and seed and corn are one.

Because thou art the doer and the deed
Because thou art the thinker and the thought,
Because thou art the helper and the need,
And the cold doubt that brings all things to nought.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Shall be in peril from that hour
Of blindness and the endless night ;

And who shall hear in one short name
Apocalyptic thunders seven
His heart shall flicker like a flame
'Twixt Hell's gates and the gates of Heaven.

For I have seen your body's grace,
The miracle of the flowering rod,
And in the beauty of thy face
The glory of the face of God,

And I have heard the thunderous roll
Clamoured from heights of prophecy,
Your splendid name, and from my soul
Uprose the clouds of minstrelsy.

Now I have chosen in the dark
The desolate way to walk alone,
Yet strive to keep alive one spark
Of your known grace and grace unknown ;

And when I leave you lest my love
Should seal your spirit's ark with clay
Spread your bright wings, O shining Dove —
But my way is the darkest way.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

THE BOOK OF

133 *The Backward Glance*

THEY set him on a sunny road,
His face toward the world's expanse:
"Yonder," they said, "the victor's crown;
Beware of the backward glance."

"Run swift, run true, the crown is thine!"
Unhindered through the crescent hours
He ran a fair and level road
That went between the flowers.

But when he left the valley path
And up the hill began to climb,
He heard the sound of distant feet
That with his own kept time.

He closed his ears, he steeled his heart,
Yet still that sound came down the wind;
He turned, and saw a dreadful form
That followed far behind.

Then forward on his way he sprang,
Scaling the hill with shortening breath;
But ever on his ears there rang
The pattering feet of Death.

At noon upon a lonely height
He stood, and saw the road run down

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

A shining ribbon of desire
Straight to the promised crown.

"Lord of my life am I!" he cried,
"The crown is mine." But as the hope
Flamed in his breast, he looked behind:
Death's feet were on the slope.

Then down the steep and sudden path
Swift to the goal he took his flight.
Far down the hill, he looked again —
Death stood upon the height.

On, on he sped, until the crown
Against the glowing sunset shone:
Yet ever at the backward glance
The following form drew on.

Fast through the gathering dusk he flew:
He leapt, the guerdon to embrace.
But as he leapt, he looked behind —
Death looked him in the face.

Evelyn Underhill

134

Gallows

THERE was a weasel lived in the sun
With all his family,
Till a keeper shot him with his gun
And hung him up on a tree,
Where he swings in the wind and rain

THE BOOK OF

In the sun and in the snow,
Without pleasure, without pain
On the dead oak tree bough.

There was a crow who was no sleeper,
But a thief and a murderer
Till a very late hour; and this keeper
Made him one of the things that were,
To hang and flap in rain and wind,
In the sun and in the snow.
There are no more sins to be sinned
On the dead oak tree bough.

There was a magpie, too,
Had a long tongue and a long tail;
He could both talk and do —
But what did that avail?
He, too, flaps in the wind and rain
Alongside weasel and crow,
Without pleasure, without pain,
On the dead oak tree bough.

And many other beasts
And birds, skin, bone and feather,
Have been taken from their feasts
And hung up there together,
To swing and have endless leisure
In the sun and in the snow,
Without pain, without pleasure,
On the dead oak tree bough.

Edward Thomas

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

135 *Plaint of Friendship by Death Broken* (R. P., Loos, 1915)

GOD, if Thou livest, Thine eye on me bend,
And stay my grief and bring my pain to end:
Pain for my lost, the deepest, rarest friend
Man ever had, whence groweth this despair.

I had a friend; but, O! he is now dead;
I had a vision: for which he has bled:
I had happiness: but it is fled.
God help me now, for I must needs despair.

His eyes were dark and sad, yet never sad;
In them moved sombre figures sable-clad;
They were the deepest eyes man ever had,
They were my solemn joy — now my despair.

In my perpetual night they on me look,
Reading me slowly; and I cannot brook
Their silent beauty, for nor crack nor nook
Can cover me but they shall find me there.

His face was straight, his mouth was wide yet trim;
His hair was tangled black, and through its dim
Softness his perplexed hand would writhe and swim —
Hands that were small on arms strong-knit yet spare.

He stood no taller than our common span,
Swam but nor farther leaped nor faster ran;

THE BOOK OF

I know him spirit now, who seemed a man.
God help me now, for I must needs despair.

His voice was low and clear, yet it could rise
And beat in indignation at the skies;
Then no man dared to meet his fire-filled eyes,
And even I, his own friend, did not dare.

With humorous wistfulness he spoke to us,
Yet there was something more mysterious,
Beyond his words or silence, glorious:
I know not what, but we could feel it there.

I mind now how we sat one winter night
While past his open window raced the bright
Snow-torrent golden in the hot firelight . . .
I see him smiling at the streamered air.

I watched him to the open window go,
And lean, long smiling, whispering to the snow,
Play with his hands amid the fiery flow
And when he turned it flamed amid his hair.

Without arose a sudden bell's huge clang
Until a thousand bells in answer rang
And midnight Oxford hummed and reeled and sang
Under the whitening fury of the air.

His figure standing in the fiery room . . .
Behind him the snow seething through the gloom . . .
The great bells shaking, thundering out their doom . . .
Soft Fiery Snow and Night his being were.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Yet he could be simply glad and take his choice,
Walking spring woods, mimicking each bird voice;
When he was glad we learned how to rejoice:
 If the birds sing, 'tis to my spite they dare.

All women loved him, yet his mother won
His tenderness alone, for Moon and Sun
And rain were for him sister, brother, loved one,
 And in their life he took an equal share.

Strength he had, too; strength of unrusted will
Buttressed his natural charity, and ill
Fared it with him who sought his good to kill:
 He was its Prince and Champion anywhere.

Yet he had weakness, for he burned too fast;
And his unrecked-of body at the last
He in impatience on the bayonets cast,
 Body whose spirit had outsoared them there.

I had a friend, but, O! he is now dead.
Fate would not let me follow where he led.
In him I had happiness. But he is dead.
 God help me now, for I must needs despair.

God, if Thou livest, and indeed didst send
Thine only Son to be to all a Friend,
Bid His dark, pitying eyes upon me bend,
 God help me now, for I must needs despair.

Robert Nichols

In Hospital, *Autumn*, 1915.

THE BOOK OF

136

An Epitaph

HERE lies a most beautiful lady,
Light of step and heart was she;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Country.
But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
However rare — rare it be;
And when I crumble, who will remember
This lady of the West Country?

Walter de la Mare

137

The Listeners

"IS there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor —
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head —
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
"Is there anybody there," he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:—
"Tell them I came," and no one answered,
"That I kept my word," he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

Walter de la Mare

138

The Whisperers

AS beneath the moon I walked,
Dog-at-heel my shadow stalked,
Keeping ghostly company:
And as we went gallantly
Down the fell-road, dusty-white,

THE BOOK OF

Round us in the windy night
Bracken, rushes, bent and heather
Whispered ceaselessly together:
"Would he ever journey more,
Ever stride so carelessly,
If he knew what lies before,
And could see what we can see?"

As I listened, cold with dread,
Every hair upon my head
Strained to hear them talk of me,
Whispering, whispering ceaselessly
"Folly's fool the man must be,
Surely, since, though where he goes
He knows not, his shadow knows:
And his secret shadow never
Utters warning words, or ever
Seeks to save him from his fate,
Reckless, blindfold, and unknown,
Till death tells him all, too late,
And his shadow walks alone."

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

139 *The House of the Soul: Lay*

I HAVE forgotten my name and the name of my
nation . . . yes
I know alone I have lost myself, and have wandered far
astray
From the land where the magical fir-trees grow, farther
than far Cathay,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Farther than fair Atlantis or the hills of Tir-fa-tonn,
Or the isles of Bran and Mailduin, or the isle of
Avalon;

From the city built on the rivers, where the willow-
branches sway

To a quiet tune all night to the moon, and dream in
the sun all day,

Where the gardens drink at the river's brink and the
poppies dip to the water wan,

And the roses fall from the hot red wall like showers
of light on the water gray.

Now and again by night, when the sun's last ray
Has crawled under the sky-line, and I hear the waves'
array

March clip-clap after me, driving me up the bay
That is ringed with cliffs and foam-girt, and the bats
wheel out anon,

Sometimes I half remember . . . and again the word
is gone;

And I know that I am lonely, and the night and the
sea and the spray,

Unrestingly, unhastingly, march on with no delay,
And the sheer height of the cliffs' white stands like the
base of the great white throne,

And I seem to be left with 'God, bereft of any wisdom
to plead or pray.

Some one has leased me a house that is huge and dark
and old

And filled with other men's dust;

THE BOOK OF

I do not remember bargaining, but I pay the price in
gold,
Year after year . . . a heavy price . . . and pay it
because I must.
Its rafters are full of mould
And its bars, of rust;
The slates fly from the roof at every gust
Of the wind over the wold.

I should like to search my house, if only I were bold,
And scrape the mildew-crust
From cobweb-curtained corners that are quaintly
shaped and cold
And heaped with curious hangings; yet I have but
little lust
To find what may not be told
Or ever discussed
Hid in a closet, maybe, or carefully thrust
Into a curtain's fold.

I am afraid of my house, and I wish I knew
Who
Those other tenants were
That my landlord leased it to;
I know that they have been there,
For sometimes I find a shoe
Or a ribbon for the hair . . .
There's a grandfather clock on the stair,
And an odd little bust on a bracket, for which I don't
very much care.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

" They have left long since; what matter to you? " . . .
True.

But I wish my house was bare
And perfectly clean and new,
For the hollowed seat of a chair
Or a rod wrenched askew
Gives me the creeps, and I dare
Hardly breathe in an air
So thick with the dust of those who once were here,
and who now are . . . where?

One day the storm was loud, the clouds clung thick and
red
Close to the windows, the sky glowed like a copper
pan,
The thunder muttered and cracked, the lightning leapt
from its bed
Like a beast, the rain ripped down like a curtain of
iron thread;
And every nook of the house was dim and strange
and dread,
And odd things shuffled and squeaked in the corners,
and queer feet ran
Hither and thither . . . the light was split, furred and
unfurled like a fan . . .
That was a day of God's ban.

And it suddenly came to my mind that the house was
inhabited
By people that hid themselves, and I swore to seek and
scan

THE BOOK OF

And find those flittering feet, and the voices, and what
they said;
But the lightning flashed and shook me, and dizzied
all my head,
And I searched each room and closet, and I sped and
sped and sped
Through turret and tower and corridor, till trembling
I began
To open the dungeon doors, and lo! in the deepest,
an old, old man
That sat, and sang and span.

And, do you know, I could not find him again!
Not once! Though I sometimes fancied I heard a
strain
With a sort of humming refrain;
And I'd tip-toe down the staircase, close to the wall
To deaden my footfall;
And the singing would rise and wane,
And the flame of my secret candle shrink, and shoot
up smoky and tall.

So, very quietly creeping, I'd suddenly gain
A little, low, iron-bound door, and "Not in vain
This time," I would whisper, "my pain!"
Then I'd fling the door back quick with a cheery
call . . .
Silence, nothing at all!
Now is it not wholly plain
That here was something of wizardry, mystical,
magical?

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

I hate the clock;
It first says Tick,
It then says Tock;
I hear days flick
I see years flock,
The whole world rock;
Had I the trick
I'd like to lock
Time with a block
To make it stick.

Hic, haec and hoc,
Hoc, haec and hic,
Each, at each knock
Drops like a brick
Sticks like a stock
Just at the shock
Caught in the nick;
Therefore the mock
Of that red cock
Turned Peter sick.

My house upon the landward side
Looks out toward the town;
Pleasant it is all day to bide
High in the thin air rarefied,
And gaze delighted down
On busy folk that drive and ride
And run and crawl and hop and stride
Like beetles black and brown.

THE BOOK OF

Stiff soldiers stalk, kings pace in pride,
And statesmen stoop and frown,
The women strut and mince and glide,
Priests bustle round at Eastertide . . .
All but their boots their broad hats hide,
The wind blows out their gown, . . .
Tramps slouch and spit, boys jump and slide,
They look all head. How I deride
King, lady, priest and clown!

My house is haunted and hell-enchanted by a conjuror
vaunted . . . hear them tripping,
Chattering, scattering, imps undaunted, here they come
battering, pattering, skipping,
Dancing and prancing, gloating and glancing, bawling,
brawling, leering and lippping,
Snarling and nipping
Clinging and gripping
Winding and whirling, twisting and twirling, sliding
and sprawling askew and slipping . . .
And they revel, vitriolic,
Diabolic,
Like a devil with the colic . . .
Topping! ripping!

O the smashing and O the crashing, O the hashing
and slashing and snipping
My goods! . . . If I could give you a thrashing, send
you home with a good sound whipping,
Bestial brood of a brutal mood, when the devil and I
lay kissing and clipping . . .
Now curtseying, dipping,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Sweating and dripping,
Heel-and-toeing, to-and-froing, winking, blinking, bib-
bing, and sipping . . .
How you frolic alcoholic,
How you rollick,
Me, a wretched melancholic,
Shaming, stripping!

This was the song that, like a distant bell
Exceeding light and thin,
Came at the dawning after nights of hell
From far away within;
Maybe from that unsearchable dark cell
It did begin
Where that old man, whose name I cannot tell,
Doth sit and spin.

"Empty the winds that can the clouds dispel,
And silence after din,
Water has virtue heats of wine to quell,
Fatigue gives pause to sin,
And rest seemed good to Adam when he fell,
As to his kin;
O well it is for me, O well, O well
This way to win."

Yesterday, looking through my window-bars,
The whole sad sea was changed resplendently
By one great ship that sailed with raking spars
Into the sunshine; and her masts were three,
Red, splendid banners in the wind flew free,
Her blown white sails were thick with tempest-scars,

THE BOOK OF

Twelve blazoned shields along her sides had she,
And round about her prow, the name of the Trinity.

By night she lit her lanterns from the stars
And on her decks held mighty jubilee
With wine poured out from strange Assyrian jars
And wheaten bread for all her company.
"O sirs," I cried, "whither with such good glee
Sail ye for merchandise or mighty wars?"
The Captain said: "Come down, take ship with
me" . . .
Then with this song we weighed and sailed across the
sea.

"We that speed on the shifting floor
Where the green waters vary
With many a song and stroke of oar,
Sail for the chase of the silver boar
That's horned and hoofed and hairy;
His eyes are bright, his bristles hoar,
And hung with golden bells galore;
O many a time he flees and flies across the uplands airy,
And fierce he is, and fleet he is, and light and wight
and wary,
And bravely famed in faery lore
By many a hunter sought of yore.

"The dark, salt sea is bitter and frore,
The wind of comfort chary,
But though the drenching sleet downpour
And Manawyddan's green steed roar,
We are not solitary,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

For Rhiannon's sweet song-birds soar
About our heads for evermore.
With the first stroke for Jesus King, the second stroke
for Mary,
The third stroke for the Trinity, the fourth for the
land of faery,
By one, by two, by three, by four,
We reach the wonderful, weirded shore."

I am sailing to seek my name and the name of my
nation . . . nay
For I know the land that bore me, where the marvellous
sea beasts play,
Where are silver bells on the blackthorn boughs, and
golden bells on the may,
Where the magical Boar abideth, and the birds of
Rhiannon,
And Adam and Eve and Enoch, and Arthur and Prester
John.
I have learnt the name of my city, and learnt to ask
my way,
And the whole ship's crew are my fellows too, and a
merry crew be they;
All day we sail with a favouring gale or gird ourselves
as the storm draws on,
And strive and cope with rudder and rope, and sing
aloud in the loud affray.

And other things I have learnt, and the first is still to
say
To myself, "O unlearned fool!" and also, "Fool, be
gay!"

THE BOOK OF

O well for the glorious chase of God, and well for the
hot assay!
Well for the noise of water, for the hills where the
sun has shone,
For the trees on the far horizon and the chart we may
not con!
Well for the terrible wer-wolf, and the caves where
the witch-wife lay
Till we touched her brows with the rowan boughs and
left her harmless clay!
Well for the land where the fir-trees stand and all we
witless wanderers wonne!
God bless the fools and the wise in schools, et gloria
tibe, Domine!

Dorothy L. Sayers

140

Divina Commedia

“In la sua volontade è nostra pace.”—DANTE.

THESE things have passed; no more through twi-
light hours,
In that dark Eden of the coloured May,
On the brown river's bank among the flowers,
Countess Mathilda takes her painted way.

And little red anemones, and white
Narcissus seem to dream in vain,
Of the blue sky and the sun's gentle light
And the lost streams of the far Tuscan plain.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Now long forgotten is that wood serene
Where Lethe's moonless waters onward glide,
Bending the ragged blades of grass that lean
Forth from the green bank underneath the tide.

Noble Piccarda's pearly brows divine
Holding the secret of the world-old rune,
Like a fair jewel in a carven shrine
Trouble no more the white ways of the moon.

Long mute is Cavalcanti's broken prayer;
The smile of Beatrice, to earth denied,
Shines now no more on Saturn's golden stair;
Through no sad town shall Virgil be our guide.

Along the dark ravine, in single file,
Monks of Bologna now no longer tread
The weary mazes of the dismal aisle,
Beneath the torment of the cowls of lead.

No flaming tomb can smother down the chords
Of the new music delicately harsh,
Beyond the glint of crowns, the clash of swords,
And the lost horror of the blood stained marsh.

For we, men say, have lost our heaven and go
Along dim valleys shadowed everywhere,
Far from the hills where, glittering, the white snow
Yet stabs with cruel knives the sunny air.

As Dante's fierce God, throned in love and light
Yet pierced the hearts of gentle folk and kind,

THE BOOK OF

And drove out gracious Virgil from his sight
And turned to bitterness the sunny wind.

We sigh where Dante sang, our hungry eyes
Grown weary of the angels' flaming wings,
Have made a rainbow heaven of tears and sighs
And the sea's voice, and pale and sorrowful things.

We sigh where Dante sang — thus have we found
His poor lost people on that open road,
That leads through marsh and fire and broken ground
Unto the ultimate divine abode.

Piccarda triumphs in that dream of hers
That bitter grief and outrage had not slain,
The secret that the world's soul shakes and stirs,
That Dante sought through conquered stars in vain.

And Beatrice,— vanished is the shining sphere
And saints' high throne above the world apart,
Yet with us dwells the dream divine and dear
That folds in beauty every living heart.

The heaven time brings us shall not be too strait
For pale Francesca; only broken bars
Lie prone where once was hid, by the sad gate,
"The love that moved the sun and the other stars."

A love grown wide enough for Plato's dream
And Homer's story; not too cramped to hold
Those pilgrim souls by Acheron's sad stream,
For ever shut out of the barrèd fold.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Death without glory, heaven without wings
Or angels, bright hopes overthrown,
We sigh where Dante sang, our wanderings
Have brought us to the gate of life unknown.

No heaven is ours of lights and whirling flame —
For dying warriors a starlit goal —
But a lost country called by a new name,
Deep buried in dim valleys of the soul.

A gentle land where the white singing waves
Move softly under silver twilight skies,
And life with her fierce wars and dreadful graves
Seems but a little wind that falling sighs.

No painful voice makes pitiful that wind,
All bitter dreams sleep in the quiet vale
Where, out of clashing darkness fierce and blind,
A new dawn glimmers gently, olive-pale.

The poet's laurel and the martyr's palm,
Wither, the old enchantments fade and cease;
Yet still the vision of the ancient calm
Folds, round this weary world, wide wings of peace.

And all men passing down beneath the boughs
Of the dim forest to the magic sea
Mysterious have felt against their brows
The buffet of the ancient mystery.

A drift of scattered spray, a fallen leaf,
Bear witness to that strange and unseen wind

THE BOOK OF

That drives the high tide over shoal and reef
And lonely beaches of moon-haunted mind.

The light that passes, with a sudden thrill,
The moonlight's glamour and the twilight's gleam —
Waking beyond our world of good and ill
The sleeping purpose underneath the dream.

The ray of cold reality austere,
Shining beyond the gates of joy or dole,
That to the eyes of sorrow shall make clear
The hidden dweller in the darkened soul.

For whose sake Dante by the convent door,
Sure of his golden heaven at close of day,
When the monk asked what he was seeking for,
Answered but "Peace" and went upon his way.

Shrinking from dreadful creeds of storm and stress
And dreams of passionate wrath, bitter and blind,
To seek in his own soul for gentleness
And find the Divine in a comrade's mind.

As one who knew the inner unseen tide
Of beauty beating up against the walls
At evening, breaking down their coloured pride
When all things are as one, and twilight falls.

This was his grief, shut behind iron bars,
Roaming through darkened rooms in sunless towers —
His soul yet caught a glamour from the stars
And knew the dauntless will of the wild flowers.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The captive soul of gentleness in him
Looked out through narrowed windows, passion-
blurred;
Yet through the darkness of his prison dim
The far faint voices of the rain were heard.

With them he trysted outside heaven's gate
Who mould the gracious word and carve the stone,
To thrust aside one moment love and hate
And gaze into the eyes of the Unknown.

For he was one of those sad souls who wrought
Life into glory, marble into form,
And carved across the brows of human thought
The Eternal Beauty's pale and frozen storm.

Now that the sunshine has quenched all his fire
And time has swept his narrow gates apart,
We lean across the sundering ages dire
To greet the dreamer of the pitiless heart,

Knowing the Infinite Quiet, pale and vast,
Floats round his dreams, as the dark tide floats round
The loud green waves that rise and thunder past
And sink to rest in silent seas profound.

Eva Gore-Booth

THE BOOK OF

141 *Niccolo Machiavelli*

FROM thy serene abode thou lookest down
With pitying eye upon a rabble rout
Who strive and plot and fight and turn about,
Endeavoring to seize some phantom crown,—
Whether of kingdom or of some small town,
Or village — or one single home — their own :
They stumble, and with hurried steps awry
Blindly they miss their opportunity ;
Whilst, all the time, thy Golden Book is there.
Ripe with earth's wisdom ; but they only stare
Or pass along with stupid scoff and curse,
Using thy name for " scoundrelly " or worse.

Of all those who have striven to endow
The world with garnered knowledge, only thou
Hast for so long endured of thorns the crown ;
Beneath the feet of swine thy name is thrown ;
And in the streets thy priceless wit doth lie ;
So that, alone, the stooping passer-by
Undaunted by an epithet, may find ;
And treasuring like gold seven times refined,
Open the casket with exultant air
To see the Pearl of Wisdom lying there.

Bernard Gilbert

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

142

Biography

WHEN I am buried, all my thoughts and acts
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten
The dates which made me will be all forgotten;
And none will know the gleam there used to be
About the feast days freshly kept by me,
But men will call the golden hour of bliss
"About this time," or "shortly after this."

Men do not heed the rungs by which men climb
Those glittering steps, those milestones upon Time,
Those tombstones of dead selves, those hours of birth,
Those moments of the soul in years of earth;
They mark the height achieved, the main result,
The power of freedom in the perished cult,
The power of boredom in the dead man's deeds,
Not the bright moments of the sprinkled seeds.

•

By many waters and on many ways
I have known golden instants and bright days;
The day on which, beneath an arching sail,
I saw the Cordilleras and gave hail;
The summer day on which in heart's delight
I saw the Swansea Mumbles bursting white,
The glittering day when all the waves wore flags
And the ship wanderer came with sails in rags;
That curlew-calling time in Irish dusk
When life became more splendid than its husk,

THE BOOK OF

When the rent chapel on the brae at Slains
Shone with a doorway opening beyond brains;
The dawn when, with a brace-block's creaking cry,
Out of the mist a little barque slipped by,
Spilling the mist with changing gleams of red,
Then gone, with one raised hand and one turned head;
The howling evening when the spindrift's mists
Broke to display the four Evangelists,
Snow-capped, divinely granite, lashed by breakers,
Wind-beaten bones of long since buried acres;
The night alone near water when I heard
All the sea's spirit spoken by a bird;
The English dusk when I beheld once more
(With eyes so changed) the ship, the citted shore,
The lines of masts, the streets so cheerly trod
(In happier seasons) and gave thanks to God.
All had their beauty, their bright moments' gift,
Their something caught from Time, the ever-swift.

All of those gleams were golden; but life's hands
Have given more constant gifts in changing lands,
And when I count those gifts, I think them such
As no man's bounty could have bettered much:
The gift of country life, near hills and woods
Where happy waters sing in solitudes,
The gift of being near ships, of seeing each day
A city of ships with great ships under weigh,
The great street paved with water, filled with shipping,
And all the world's flags flying and seagulls dipping.

Yet when I am dust my penman may not know
Those water-tramplng ships which made me glow,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

But think my wonder mad and fail to find
Their glory, even dimly, from my mind.
And yet they made me: — not alone the ships
But men hard-palmed from tallying-on to whips,
The two close friends of nearly twenty years,
Sea-followers both, sea-wrestlers and sea-peers,
Whose feet with mine wore many a bolt-head bright
Treading the decks beneath the riding light.
Yet death will make that warmth of friendship cold
And who'll know what one said and what one told
Our hearts' communion and the broken spells
When the loud call blew at the strike of bells?
No one, I know, yet let me be believed
A soul entirely known is life achieved.

Years blank with hardship never speak a word
Live in the soul to make the being stirred,
Towns can be prisons where the spirit dulls
Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,
Away from all bright water and great hills
And sheep-walks where the curlews cry their fills,
Away in towns, where eyes have nought to see
But dead museums and miles of misery
And floating life unrooted from man's need
And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch greed
And life made wretched out of human ken
And miles of shopping women served by men.
So, if the penman sums my London days
Let him but say that there were holy ways,
Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick mansions old
With stinking doors where women stood to scold

THE BOOK OF

And drunken waits at Christmas with their horn
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was born;
And windy gas lamps and the wet roads shining
And that old carol of the midnight whining,
And that old room (above the noisy slum)
Where there was wine and fire and talk with some
Under strange pictures of the wakened soul
To whom this earth was but a burnt-out coal.

O Time, bring back those midnights and those friends,
Those glittering moments that a spirit lends
That all may be imagined from the flash
The cloud-hid god-game through the lightning gash
Those hours of stricken sparks from which men took
Light to send out to men in song or book,
Those friends who heard St. Pancras' bells strike two
Yet stayed until the barber's cockerel crew.
Talking of noble styles, the Frenchman's best,
The thought beyond great poets not expressed,
The glory of mood where human frailty failed,
The forts of human light not yet assailed.
Till the dim room had mind and seemed to brood
Binding our wills to mental brotherhood,
Till we became a college, and each night
Was discipline and manhood and delight,
Till our farewells and winding down the stairs
At each grey dawn had meaning that Time spares,
That we, so linked, should roam the whole world round
Teaching the ways our brooding minds had found
Making that room our Chapter, our one mind
Where all that this world soiled should be refined.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Often at night I tread those streets again
And see the alley glimmering in the rain,
Yet now I miss that sign of earlier tramps
A house with shadows of plane-boughs under lamps,
The secret house where once a beggar stood
Trembling and blind to show his woe for food.
And now I miss that friend who used to walk
Home to my lodgings with me, deep in talk,
Wearing the last of night out in still streets
Trodden by us and policemen on their beats
And cats, but else deserted; now I miss
That lively mind and guttural laugh of his
And that strange way he had of making gleam,
Like something real, the art we used to dream.
London has been my prison, but my books
Hills and great waters, labouring men and brooks,
Ships and deep friendships and remembered days
Which even now set all my mind ablaze
As that June day when, in the red bricks' clinks
I saw the old Roman ruins white with pinks
And felt the hillside haunted even then
By not dead memory of the Roman men.
And felt the hillside thronged by souls unseen
Who knew the interest in me and were keen
That man alive should understand man dead
So many centuries since the blood was shed.
And quickened with strange hush because this comer
Sensed a strange soul alive behind the summer.
That other day on Ercal when the stones
Were sunbleached white, like long unburied bones,
While the bees droned and all the air was sweet
From honey buried underneath my feet,

THE BOOK OF

Honey of purple heather and white clover
Sealed in its gummy bags till summer's over.
Then other days by water, by bright sea,
Clear as clean glass and my bright friend with me,
The cove clean-bottomed where we saw the brown
Red spotted plaice go skimming six feet down
And saw the long fronds waving, white with shells,
Waving, unfolding drooping, to the swells;
That sadder day when we beheld the great
And terrible beauty of a Lammas spate
Roaring white-mouthed in all the great cliff's gaps
Headlong, tree-tumbling fury of collapse,
While drenching clouds drove by and every sense
Was water roaring or rushing or in offence,
And mountain sheep stood huddled and blown gaps
gleamed
Where torn white hair of torrents shook and streamed.
That sadder day when we beheld again
A spate going down in sunshine after rain,
When the blue reach of water leaping bright
Was one long ripple and clatter, flecked with white.
And that far day, that never blotted page
When youth was bright like flowers about old age
Fair generations bringing thanks for life
To that old kindly man and trembling wife
After their sixty years: Time never made
A better beauty since the Earth was laid
Than that thanksgiving given to grey hair
For the great gift of life which brought them there.

Days of endeavour have been good: the days
Racing in cutters for the comrade's praise,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

The day they led my cutter at the turn
Yet could not keep the lead and dropped astern,
The moment in the spurt when both boats' oars
Dipped in each other's wash and throats grew hoarse
And teeth ground into teeth and both strokes quickened
Lashing the sea, and gasps came and hearts sickened
And coxswains damned us, dancing, banking stroke,
To put our weights on, though our hearts were broke
And both boats seemed to stick and sea seemed glue,
The tide a mill race we were struggling through
And every quick recover gave us squints
Of them still there, and oar tossed water-glints
And cheering came, our friends, our foemen cheering,
A long wild, rallying murmur on the hearing —
"Port Fore!" and "Starboard Fore!" "Port Fore!"
 "Port Fore!"
"Up with her, Starboard," and at that each oar
Lightened, though arms were bursting, and eyes shut
And the oak stretchers grunted in the strut
And the curse quickened from the cox, our bows
Crashed, and drove talking water, we made vows,
Chastity vows and temperance; in our pain
We numbered things we'd never eat again
If we could only win; then came the yell
"Starboard," "Port Fore," and then a beaten bell
Rung as for fire to cheer us. "Now." Oars bent,
Soul took the looms now body's belt was spent.
"Damn it, come on now," "On now," "On now,"
 "Starboard."
"Port Fore." "Up with her, Port;" each cutter har-
 boured
Ten eye-shut painsick strugglers, "Heave, oh, heave,"

THE BOOK OF

Catcalls waked echoes like a shrieking sheave.
"Heave," and I saw a back, then two. "Port Fore."
"Starboard." "Come on." I saw the midship oar
And knew we had done them. "Port Fore." "Star-
board." "Now."

I saw bright water spurting at their bow
Their cox' full face an instant. They were done.
The watchers' cheering almost drowned the gun.
We had hardly strength to toss our oars; our cry
Cheering the losing cutter was a sigh.
Other bright days of action have seemed great:
Wild days in a pampero off the Plate;
Good swimming days, at Hog Back or the Coves
Which the young gannet and the corbie loves;
Surf-swimming between rollers, catching breath
Between the advancing grave and breaking death,
Then shooting up into the sunbright smooth
To watch the advancing roller bare her tooth,
And days of labour also, loading, hauling;
Long days at winch or capstan, heaving, pawling;
The days with oxen, dragging stone from blasting,
And dusty days in mills, and hot days masting.
Trucking on dust-dry deckings smooth like ice,
And hunts in mighty wool-racks after mice;
Mornings with buckwheat when the fields did blanch
With White Leghorns come from the chicken ranch.
Days near the spring upon the sunburnt hill,
Plying the maul or gripping tight the drill.
Delights of work most real, delights that change
The headache life of towns to rapture strange
Not known by townsmen, nor imagined; health
That puts new glory upon mental wealth

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

And makes the poor man rich.

But that ends, too,
Health with its thoughts of life; and that bright view
That sunny landscape from life's peak, that glory,
And all a glad man's comments on life's story
And thoughts of marvellous towns and living men
And what pens tell and all beyond the pen
End, and are summed in words so truly dead
They raise no image of the heart and head.
The life, the man alive, the friend we knew,
The mind ours argued with or listened to,
None; but are dead, and all life's keenness, all,
Is dead as print before the funeral,
Even deader after, when the dates are sought.
And cold minds disagree with what we thought.
This many pictured world of many passions
Wears out the nations as a woman fashions,
And what life is is much to very few,
Men being so strange, so mad, and what men do
So good to watch or share; but when men count
Those hours of life that were a bursting fount,
Sparkling the dusty heart with living springs,
There seems a world, beyond our earthly things,
Gated by golden moments, each bright time
Opening to show the city white like lime,
High towered and many peopled. This made sure,
Work that obscures those moments seems impure,
Making our not-returning time of breath
Dull with the ritual and records of death,
That frost of fact by which our wisdom gives
Correctly stated death to all that lives.

THE BOOK OF

Best trust the happy moments. What they gave
Makes man less fearful of the certain grave,
And gives his work compassion and new eyes.
The days that make us happy make us wise.

John Maschfield

143

Nod

SOFTLY along the road of evening,
In a twilight dim with rose,
Wrinkled with age, and drenched with dew
Old Nod, the shepherd, goes.

His drowsy flock streams on before him,
Their fleeces charged with gold,
To where the sun's last beam leans low
On Nod the shepherd's fold.

The hedge is quick and green with briar,
From their sand the conies creep;
And all the birds that fly in heaven
Flock singing home to sleep.

His lambs outnumber a noon's roses,
Yet, when night's shadows fall,
His blind old sheep-dog, Slumber-soon
Misses not one of all.

His are the quiet steeps of dreamland,
— The waters of no-more-pain,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

His ram's bell rings 'neath an arch of stars,
"Rest, rest, and rest again."

Walter de la Mare

144

Sonnet

SLEEP, get a dream out of your secret chest,
From that long drawer where the great visions lie
With folded wings. Sleep, pick me out the best;
Then, as we see the moon bound in the sky
By a great ring of cold on winter nights
And seeming shut away, my frozen soul
Shall open to the prick of northern lights,
And by that guest that flies from pole to pole
Of human consciousness, but is not heard
Except when a great stillness lies beneath
Supernal calm, my spirit shall be stirred,
Calling on what it once believed was death —
As to its source — and entering, O Sleep,
Into eternal peace, no more to weep.

Fredgond Shove

145

Kisses in the Rain

I SAW the midlands
Revolve through her hair;
The fields of autumn
Stretching bare,
And sheep on the pasture
Tossed back in a scare.

THE BOOK OF

And still as ever
The world went round,
My mouth on her pulsing
Neck was found,
And my breast to her beating
Breast was bound.

But my heart at the centre
Of all, in a swoond
Was still as a pivot,
As all the ground
On its prowling orbit
Shifted round.

And still in my nostrils
The scent of her flesh,
And still my wet mouth
Sought her afresh;
And still one pulse
Through all the world did thresh.

And the world all whirling
Around in joy
Like the dance of a dervish
Did destroy
My sense — and my reason
Spun like a toy.

But firm at the centre
My heart was found;
Her own to my perfect
Heart-beat bound,

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Like a magnet's keeper
Closing the round.

D. H. Lawrence

146 *We Would See Love*

WE would see Love! Sweet, have we not desired,
Sought, hungered thirsted, agonized, aspired,
Met, clasped, refused? and ever more required
This answer at the end? We would see Love!

We would see Love! Must his companions be
The chiefest sharers of felicity?
Some follower hold our life in custody
Some appetite or law? We would see Love!

We would see Love! Touch and the things of sense,
Our spirits' pupilage, our minds' suspense
Of expectation, - what conjures him thence
Who is so far within? We would see Love!
We would see Love! His face if none draw nigh
Except their whole lives shatter up thereby,
Agree, sweet! Let us look on God and die,
Feel him, one shock, and end! We would see Love!

Charles Williams

THE BOOK OF

147

Amourette

The Woman and the Philosopher

She: What shall I do, most pleasing man?
I will delight you if I can.
Shall I be silent? Shall I speak?
Since I love quick I'll show that I am weak:
I'll say the wisest strangest thing I know
That you may smile at vanity, and love me so.

He: How can her wisdom flourish and endure
When her philosophy is but a lure,
And to the arsenal of charm is brought
The ammunition of her thought?
I count her breathing as I sit;
I love her mouth, but disregard her wit.

She: More than love, and more than other pleasure
I desire thrilling combat of the wit.
As far as I can measure
This man is rare, and therefore fit
To be a combatant, let me say one thing new
That I may gage him so, to prove my judgment
true.

(Here follows an argument.)

She: Sir, it is just I own
That I am overthrown,
And I take strange delight
That I am beaten so to-night.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

He: Madam, you are a sensualist,
And, being such, you shall be kissed.

She: What husbandry is this?
What thrift, that we should kiss
On the first night we meet?
What is your need to eat the seed,
When growth might be so sweet?
From this first pleasure that you sow in me
It is my power to raise a gracious tree.
And maybe, I will give you a kind grove
Where you may sit through sunny days, and love.

He: This answer, which is rare,
Is luring as your hair.
I go from you this night in pain,
But Madam, I will come again.

She: Dreams, dreams, stay with me till I sleep,
Then let oblivion steep
My senses in forgetfulness,
That when I wake, I may forget my loneliness.
Anna Wickham

148 *The Faithful Amorist*

AM I not the lover of Beauty
To follow her where I know she is hid
By the aroma of her pleasure?
Yesterday I had pleasure of Helen,

THE BOOK OF

Of white, of yellow hair,
But to-day a negress is my delight,
And Beauty is black.
There are some that are as small tradesmen,
To sell beauty in a shop,
Noting what has been desired, and acclaiming it
eternally good.

So poets fill verses
For ever with the owl, the oak, and the nightingale.
I say the crow is a better bird than the nightingale.
Since to-day Beauty is black.

The lark sings flat
Of wearisome trees and spiritless fields.
But there is great music in the hyæna,
For there is pleasure in deserts.

Anna Wickham

149

The Mummer

STRICT I walk my ordered way
Through the strait and duteous day;
The hours are nuns that summon me
To offices of huswifry.
Cups and cupboards, flagons, food
Are things of my solicitude;
No elfin folly haply strays
Down my precise and well-swept ways.

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

When that compassionate lady Night
Shuts out a prison from my sight,
With other thrift I turn a key
Of the old chest of Memory.
And in my spacious dreams unfold
A flimsy stuff of green and gold.
And walk and wander in the dress
Of old delights, and tenderness.
Anna Wickham

150 *The World's Miser*

I

A MISER with an eager face
Sees that each roseleaf is in place.

He keeps beneath strong bolts and bars
The piercing beauty of the stars.

The colours of the dying day
He hoards as treasures — well He may! —

And saves with care (lest they be lost)
The dainty diagrams of frost.

He counts the hairs of every head,
And grieves to see a sparrow dead.

THE BOOK OF

II

Among the yellow primroses
He holds His summer palaces,

And sets the grass about them all
To guard them as His spearmen small.

He fixes on each wayside stone
A mark to shew it as His Own,

And knows when raindrops fall through air
Whether each single one be there,

That gathered into ponds and brooks
They may become His picture-books,

To shew in every spot and place
The living glory of His face.

Theodore Maynard

151

Apocalypse

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."—Apoc. xxi, I.

SHALL summer woods where we have laughed our
fill:

Shall all your grass so good to walk upon;
Each field which we have loved, each little hill
Be burnt like paper — as hath said Saint John?

MODERN BRITISH VERSE

Then not alone they die! For God hath told
How all His plains of mingled fire and glass,
His walls of hyacinth, His streets of gold,
His aureoles of jewelled light shall pass,

That He may make us nobler things than these,
And in her royal robes of blazing red
Adorn His bride. Yea, with what mysteries
And might and mirth shall she be diamonded!

And what new secrets shall our God disclose;
Or set what sums of burnished brass to flare;
Or what empurpled blooms to oust the rose;
Or what strange grass to glow like angels' hair!

What pinnacles of silver tracery,
What dizzy rampired towers shall God devise
Of topaz, beryl and chalcedony
To make Heaven pleasant to His children's eyes!

And in what cataclysms of flame and foam
Shall the first Heaven sink — as red as sin —
When God hath cast aside His ancient home
As far too mean to house His children in!

Theodore Maynard

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